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A. Daniels
1916.

Barrett
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THE DEAN'S ENGLISH.

“He who cannot express his thoughts correctly in his own language, is not likely to obtain credit for much knowledge of any other; nor will an ill-spelt, ungrammatical letter impress anyone with the idea that the writer of it is an ‘*educated*’ man; while, on the other hand, the Englishman whose linguistic acquirements do not extend beyond the language of Shakspeare, but who knows that thoroughly and can wield it well, possesses an instrument with which he may fight his way to almost any position he may choose to aspire to, whether he turn his thoughts to poetry or to polities, to literature or to commerce.”—

THE READER, January 28, 1865.

LAE. Gr
M818d

THE
DEAN'S ENGLISH

A Criticism on the Dean of Canterbury's Essays

ON THE

QUEEN'S ENGLISH.

BY
G. WASHINGTON MOON,
FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE.

Fourth Edition.

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189 GRAND STREET, NEW-YORK.

“Literature, if it is to flourish, must have a standard of taste built up, which shall expand to meet new forms of excellence, but which shall preserve that which is excellent in old forms, and shall serve as a guide to the rejection of whatever is bad, pretentious, and artificial; and it is the business of critics to see that this standard is built up and maintained.”—SATURDAY REVIEW.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

I HAVE been asked not to publish another edition of this work; but I do not think I should be benefiting the cause of literature by complying with that request. “*The care of the national language,*” says Schlegel, “*is at all times a sacred trust.*” “*Every man of education should make it the object of his unceasing concern to preserve his language pure*”; and I consider that I am doing only my duty in that respect, when I re-issue this work, which, by exposing the errors of one of exalted position and reputed learning, makes a

“light in the church” serve as a beacon to all around.

I wish it to be distinctly understood that in publishing these criticisms I have not been actuated by any feeling of ill-will towards the Dean of Canterbury. I object not to the man, but to the man’s language ; it is faulty in the extreme ; and since the faults of teachers, if suffered to pass unreproved, soon become the teachers of faults, it was necessary that some one should take upon himself the task of “demonstrating”, as ‘*The Edinburgh Review*’ said, “*that while the Dean undertook to instruct others, he was himself but a castaway in matters of grammar*”. As a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, one of the objects of which is “to preserve the purity of the English language”, I took upon myself the demonstration. How far I have succeeded, each

individual reader will determine for himself; but the rapid sale of three editions of '*The Dean's English*', and the demand for a fourth, give very flattering evidence that, by the public generally, the work has been favourably received.

Since the publication of the last edition of '*The Dean's English*', the Dean has brought out the second edition of '*The Queen's English*'. One circumstance, in connexion with that, is worthy of remark. In '*Good Words*' the Dean said to his readers,—“*The less you turn your words right or left to observe Mr. Moon's rules, the better*”. It will provoke a smile on the face of the reader of these pages to be told, that the Dean himself, although he gives this advice to *others*, has altered and struck out, altogether not fewer than eight-and-twenty passages which I had condemned as faulty. For the entertain-

ment of the curious in such matters, I have given, in parallel columns in this edition, the sentences as originally published in '*Good Words*', and condemned in '*The Dean's English*'; and the altered sentences as they now appear in the Dean's second edition of his '*Queen's English*'.

The Dean's book contains much valuable information, collected from various sources; but it is blended with so very much that would be really injurious to the student of literature, that the work can never safely be recommended for his guidance. The style, too, in which it is written, is so hopelessly bad, that no amount of alteration could obtain for it the praise of being a model for chasteness and elegance of expression. We still read in it, of persons making "*a precious mess*" of their work! and expletives, we are

informed, serve to “*grease the wheels of talk*”! Improvements, it is true, have been made in some of the paragraphs; *a man* is no longer spoken of by the slang phrase “*an individual*”; but the Dean is so strangely forgetful of the courtesy due to women, that he uses, respecting them, the most debasing of all slang phrases. He speaks of “*some of the European rulers*”; [there are but two to whom the Dean’s words *can* refer;—our own Sovereign Lady, and the Queen of Spain;] and he describes these by an epithet which is equally applicable to dogs!—they are “*females*”!

Surely, after this, it will be only modest of the Dean to retire from the office of lecturer on the Queen’s English; and, if his good sense has not utterly left him, he will wisely reflect on the folly of attracting attention to a style of writing

PREFACE.

“*which*”, as Junius said of the character of Sir William Draper, “*will only pass without censure when it passes without observation*”.

• *London, March, 1865.*

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE issue of a second edition of these letters afforded me an opportunity for noticing certain explanations of my opponent, the Dean of Canterbury, and for extending my criticisms to his '*Plea for the Queen's English, No. III*'.

I resumed the subject in perfect confidence that he, who in the recent edition of his essays on the Queen's English had honoured me with his expressions of friendship, and had thought it quite consistent with friendship that he should combat my objections, and maintain and

defend his own opinions, would not refuse me a right which he claimed for himself.

I did not extend my criticisms to his recently published volume '*The Queen's English*'; but, taking up the subject where I had left off, I continued my strictures on the essays as they originally appeared in '*Good Words*'.

The reader is doubtless aware that, "in "a considerably altered form", the said essays were subsequently "presented to "the public". In that volume some of the passages which I had criticised were defended; others were, very prudently, omitted; and many more were "considerably altered"; but sentences "altered" by my opponent are not always improved. The following one has gone through the process;—"I *used* the word "in an *unusual* sense, but at the same

“time one *fully sanctioned by usage.*” This needs no comment. The Dean changed the structure of that passage also, where, between the pronoun “it” and the noun “habit” to which it refers, eight-and-twenty substantives intervene. “But”, it has been remarked, “in altering this passage he opened his armour “in such a way as to give the critic a “most tempting opportunity for inflicting “another gash on his somewhat careless “opponent.” In ‘*Good Words*’ the Dean wrote,—“You perhaps have heard of the “barber who, while operating on a gentle-“man, expressed his opinion, that, after all, “the cholera was in the *hair.*” As “altered”, the sentence runs thus,—“We remember *in* “*Punch* the barber who, while operating”, &c. This, of course, suggests the idea that *Punch*, besides being a wit, and a satirist, is also a barber, and that he not

only operates upon human consciences but also upon human chins! The Dean will very likely put in his irresistible plea,—“We do not write for idiots”; but, seeing he is always trying to make us believe that the style he advocates is one pre-eminent for its direct and simple clearness, he should so write that it would be almost impossible to misunderstand him. Had he made but the most trifling alteration in his sentence, no other meaning, than that which he wished to express, would have been suggested. Why, for example, did he not write,—“We remember reading in *Punch*, of the barber who,” &c.? This would have been much more perspicuous.

The Dean thought it advisable to change the name also of his work. It was no longer ‘*A Plea for the Queen’s English*’, but ‘*The Queen’s English*’. This alter-

ation compelled me to give up the title under which the first of these letters appeared, namely, ‘*A Defence of the Queen’s English*’; lest, by still retaining that title, it should seem, to those persons who are unacquainted with the controversy, to imply that I had actually written a defence of my opponent’s book—a defence of ‘*The Queen’s English*’!

It is with sincere pleasure that I record my acceptance of Dr. Alford’s explanation respecting the objectionable epithets contained in his reply to my first letter,—they were not intended for me, but for some hypothetical person.—I request the reader will receive my remarks on the said epithets as intended for some hypothetical Dean.

Since those remarks were published I have had the honour of becoming personally acquainted with my opponent; and

those who enjoy the privilege of his society will have no difficulty in believing, that I sincerely respect him as a man, although I cannot think very highly of him as an English scholar.

London, October, 1864.

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The Controversy on the Queen's English.

EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS.

THE EDINBURGH REVIEW.

MR. WASHINGTON Moon amused himself by demonstrating that while the Dean undertook to instruct others, the author was himself but a castaway in matters of grammar. The Dean's style is neither particularly elegant nor correct, and his adversary sometimes hits him hard; besides in one or two cases successfully disputing his judgments.

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

THE DEAN has laid himself open to criticism as much for bad taste as for questionable syntax. His style of writing is awkward and slovenly, that of his antagonist remarkably terse and clear, and bearing witness to a sensitiveness of ear and taste which are glaringly deficient in his opponent.

THE DUBLIN REVIEW.

EVERY reader of Dean Alford's '*Queen's English*' should make himself acquainted with '*The Dean's English*', by Mr. G. Washington Moon. He has exposed certain literary trips on the part of his antagonist, in an amusing and telling way, and has put together a smart little volume which is well worth the reading. We think that even practised writers may learn a lesson or two in the art of expressing themselves in their mother tongue clearly and correctly, by a perusal, both of the Dean's '*Stray Notes*' and of Mr. Moon's rejoinder.

THE LONDON REVIEW.

BOTH Dean Alford's book on '*The Queen's English*', and Mr. G. Washington Moon's slashing commentary on the same, entitled '*The Dean's English*', in which he certainly makes mincemeat of a good deal of his opponent's composition, are calculated to render considerable service to loose thinkers, speakers, and writers ; and certainly both are very entertaining. Mr. Moon's volume points out some serious errors of style ; it diminishes the pretensions of a censor who, though himself rendering good service to the purity of our tongue, is certainly not entitled to be so loftily severe on others ; and it has the relish and zest of a sharp passage of arms.

THE LONDON QUARTERLY REVIEW.

THE books which come next are those of Dean Alford and Mr. Moon. Last year the former contributed some interesting papers to '*Good Words*' on the '*Queen's English*'. Like a liege subject, he entered the lists against the foes of his sovereign lady, and had already unhorsed some pretenders, when, lo! another knight—and no carpet knight—appeared upon the arena, and charged the Dean; accusing him of having been guilty of the very violations of law and good taste which he had condemned in others. These doughty champions ended their feud in peace. But Mr. Moon may say, "What I have written, I have written".

Mr. Moon knows the secrets of both the strength and the grace of his own tongue; and should, we think, follow up the good impression he has produced, by publishing something that might help young writers to the acquisition of a pure and nervous style.

THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN EVANGELICAL REVIEW.

READERS will remember Dean Alford's papers on '*The Queen's English*' in '*Good Words*', and the correspondence they provoked. Mr. Moon was one of the Dean's adversaries, and fired off a pamphlet against him, which called forth a rejoinder from the warlike Dean. But the critic laid himself open to a cross fire, and got criticised to his heart's content. Many thought Mr. Moon had by no means the worst of it in the war of words and strife of tongues.

THE WEEKLY REVIEW.

DR. ALFORD, Dean of Canterbury, is known as a devout and accomplished minister—as an excellent preacher—as the author of a critical and expository edition of the Greek Testament, which is an evidence of his industry and research, if not of profound scholarship—and as the writer of one or two fair specimens of poetical composition. In addition to the claims which any or all of the foregoing may give him on public confidence and regard, the Dean has been desirous to assert for himself the reputation of a philologist and grammarian, and to place himself in the position of arbiter and oracle on the subject of the “Queen’s English”. Mr. Moon is not disposed to bow to Dean Alford in this matter, and in reply to the Anglican clergyman’s ‘*Queen’s English*’ has come forth with ‘*The Dean’s English*’. It is a pretty generally received opinion that the ecclesiastic has got the worst of it.

Mr. Moon not only shows (in several instances at least) that Dr. Alford is wrong in the *ex cathedrâ* judgments he pronounces as to certain popular forms of speech, but demonstrates that the Dean’s whole papers are specimens of slipshod writing, and abound with inelegancies, if not inaccuracies, of composition.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW.

In calmly reviewing the whole matter, we cannot but feel that Mr. Moon has come off the

victor; and if there are some few remarks of a strictly personal character, that we would rather have seen omitted from this second edition of his work, we must admit that it is a smart piece of verbal prose criticism, and is of more than passing interest. Mr. Moon well performs his self-imposed task: he evinces a fine sense of discernment in the niceties of language; and, while severely criticising the sentences of his opponent, shows that he himself knows how to write in a remarkably clear, terse, and vigorous style.

We have only to add, that we have read '*The Dean's English*' with pleasure, and we can recommend this carefully prepared work—which does credit alike to author and publisher—to all who are interested in the study of language, or desire to sharpen their wits by the perusal of a little Cobbett-like criticism.

THE JOURNAL OF SACRED LITERATURE.

THE critic's calling is exceedingly difficult, and requires for its successful prosecution an aggregate of moral and intellectual excellencies which few men possess. Again, it is a very difficult thing to speak and to write good English; yet everybody thinks he can both speak and write it, and most men fancy they can criticize it too. But the difficulty of producing unexceptionable English, lays open to censure almost all writers and speakers. Dean Alford is an example: we

know him to be a popular writer, and we believe him to be a good one ; but he is not faultless, and, having been tempted in an evil hour to turn critic, he has brought upon himself a deluge of criticism. Mr. Moon in particular overwhelms him with accusations, to some of which we fear he must plead guilty. We read Dean Alford's book on the Queen's English, with considerable pleasure, and gathered out of it some useful hints, but we felt, at the same time, that he employed constructions which were doubtful, and that his opinions did not always agree with what we had been led to regard as good usage.

Mr. Moon has raised a far larger number of objections than occurred to us, and the volume in which he embodies them is one of the smartest pieces of criticism we ever read. It is not only admirable as a specimen of critical style, but it abounds in suggestions which no man in his senses can undervalue : more than this, it is a delightful example of good writing. The vigour of the critic is sometimes almost like severity, but we doubt whether it is ever malicious, and so we enjoy the book and learn from it at one and the same time.

THE PHONETIC JOURNAL.

IF, as some good people hold, everybody and everything is created, not merely for a general, but moreover for some specific, purpose, then we

might infer that the particular use to which Nature destined the Dean of Canterbury was to set himself up to lecture upon the Queen's English, and so to offer himself as a conspicuous mark, and a defenceless victim, to the scathing criticism and merciless exposure of Mr. George Washington Moon. Not for many years, have we seen such a brilliant and effective passage of arms, as is contained in the little book under notice, which consists principally of three letters addressed to Dr. Alford. To say, that the poor Dean is worsted in the encounter, is to say very little. His defeat is almost too complete. Like an untrained youth, in the grasp of an athlete, he never has even a chance. At every round, he is quickly thrown; and the blows, given with a will, and planted with a precision and vigour, which no feint can elude, fall fast and heavily on his defenceless head. At every point, the Dean is confronted by his pertinacious and inexorable assailant, who leaves him no possibility of escape; or, if he does occasionally attempt a feeble defence, it only serves to bring down upon himself still severer punishment, until, exhausted by the encounter, he does that, which, for his own sake, he had better have done at first—makes peace with his adversary while yet he is in the way with him.

To set one's self up for a teacher of English, pure and undefiled; jauntily to ascend the rostrum, as one gifted with authority to lay down the whole law; and then to be met with such a withering exposure of incompetence,

with such inevitable inferences of imbecility, as constitute the staple of Mr. Moon's book; for the physician, who gratuitously obtrudes his advice upon us, and vaunts his ability to cure our disorder,—for him to be convicted of labouring under a virulent form of the same disease, certainly this is *not* a pleasant position for a man to occupy, and we heartily commiserate the unfortunate Dean.

Even in the fair field of criticism he is quite unable to cope with his skilful and alert adversary. Never was there a more conspicuous instance of going out to shear, and coming home shorn. For our own part, we would rather have submitted to a month's stone-breaking than have called down upon ourselves such withering sarcasms and incisive irony as Dr. Alford's language has so justly provoked.

To those who are interested in speaking and writing good English,—and what educated person is not?—this book is full of instruction; and to those who enjoy a controversy, conducted with consummate skill, and in excellent taste by a strong man, well armed, it is such a treat as does not fall in one's way often during a lifetime. Regarded in itself, and without any immediate reference to its object, this book affords a model of correct and elegant English; such as it is a perfect treat to meet with, in these days of slip-shod writing. Perspicuous, compact and nervous in its construction, it is by no means deficient in some of the higher and more brilliant qualities of style; while, for re-

fined sarcasm and covert irony, it has rarely been equalled. We can assure our readers that a pleasanter or more profitable employment than the perusal of this book, it would be difficult to recommend to them.

Many of our public writers, highly educated, and perhaps *because* they have been so educated, undertake English composition as if it were the one exceptional art which required no rules but the "rule of thumb." To such, the lamentable *fiasco* of the Dean, owing to his disregard of rules, *should* be a lesson, but, too probably, will not. We cannot help wishing that a writer who is so eminently qualified as Mr. Moon to teach a subject which, just now, so greatly needs to be taught, and who illustrates so admirably by his example the precepts that he so clearly enforces, would devote himself to the task of drawing up a code of rules for composition, such as our journalists and periodical writers might appeal to, as a standard for correct English. We are of opinion that there is a crying want of such a work, that it would be one of the most useful and most popular works of the day, and that Mr. Moon, with his thorough mastery of the subject, with his keen perception, nice judgment, and pellucid and elegant style, is just the person to write it. When a man displays peculiar aptitudes, and of a high order, for a given subject, we grieve, we almost resent it, if our natural expectations should remain unfulfilled. We feel that to be defeated of our hopes is, in some sense, to be

defrauded of our rights. We think we have a right to call upon Mr. Moon, now that he has once exhibited this shining talent, not to wrap it up again in a napkin, but to put it out to interest, and we have no doubt of its bringing him back most abundant returns. We entertain this opinion notwithstanding Mr. Moon's disclaimer that "very little can be added to the canons of criticism already laid down; though very much may be done for the permanent enriching of our language, by popular writers using more care as to the examples they set in composition, than as to the lessons they teach concerning it." It is precisely because Mr. Moon teaches so well by example, that we would fain have him make this example the vehicle for the inculcation of precepts, and the execution of the work the best comment upon, and illustration of, its rules.

THE RECORD.

READERS remember a series of papers on '*The Queen's English*' by Dean Alford, which first appeared in '*Good Words*'. Immediately on the publication of the first paper, the learned Dean was inundated with epistolary comments, critiques, and remonstrances by volunteer critics from all parts of the country. The most formidable of these assailants was the redoubtable Mr. Moon, who, after a preliminary skirmish or two in private, came out with a positive pamphlet. The Dean replied, and Mr. Moon

returned again and again to the charge. The final result is that the Dean's essays are collected into a revised volume, and Mr. Moon's have settled down and completed themselves in another. Most readers will, we believe, think with us that Mr. Moon comes cleanest out of the controversy, and has in every way the best of the argument. The Dean entered the arena with a light jaunty step, and spoke with the air, and in the tone, of a man whose decision was to be final; all he said at first was quite *ex cathedrā*, and bore the look of being said by one whose *ipse dixit* was to settle all strife about words: a very Daniel in the person of a Dean had come to judgment. But he speedily had to lower his pretensions. Mr. Moon cried, "Physician, heal thyself. Before you attempt to teach us how to use the Queen's English, see that you know how to write it yourself." Coming out for wool, in fact, the Dean went back shorn; rushing forth to teach, he went home taught. We can cordially recommend Mr. Moon's volume. It is really an able critique. The argument is conducted with admirable temper, and no reader can finish the volume without learning many valuable lessons in English composition, and some other things well worth knowing.

THE CHURCHMAN.

MR. MOON has performed a public service by his exposure of the errors into which men of

even the position of Dean Alford fall when they attempt to write English. The amusing specimens of ungrammatical and slovenly sentences which are here collected will serve, we hope, to warn authors against similar offences, and we think Mr. Moon entitled to the gratitude of all lovers of our language in its purity for this exposure of the Dean's English.

THE CHURCH REVIEW.

WE do not wonder to see the collection of Mr. Washington Moon's criticisms in their third edition. The vigour with which he has attacked unlucky Dean Alford, and the awkward way in which the latter struggles and kicks under the infliction, are very entertaining. It is curious to see mistakes and inelegancies perpetrated in English composition for one tithe of which in the classical languages the offenders would meet with severe castigation, and for which, indeed, they themselves would blush with shame. The book is one which we should wish to put into the hands of our young learner of English, that he may be upon his guard against current modes of speech, and the adoption of custom as a standard.

THE CHURCH STANDARD.

THERE is so much in this neatly printed volume to command our approval, that we cannot with-

hold our meed of praise. There is a great deal of sound and trenchant criticism, and the style is vigorous, versatile, and epigrammatic.

THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

WE believe with Mr. Moon, that Dean Alford's English is singularly incorrect, and that the style of his reproofs is utterly indefensible.

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS.

To fathers of families this book will be worth more than all the money which they are now paying for their children's grammar. In many of the criticisms, the acumen displayed by Mr. Moon is of no common kind. His letters are models of English composition, and are so full of animation, so sharp, lively, and trenchant, that it is quite a treat to read them. He has demonstrated beyond dispute that the Dean of Canterbury, who sets himself up as a defender of the English language, commits the most culpable blunders in writing it. The formidable indictment is supported with an ability and acuteness we have seldom seen excelled. Mr. Moon writes with greater elegance, with greater ease, with greater perspicuity, with greater vigour, and with incomparably greater accuracy, than his opponent. He has rendered a dry and forbidding subject both pleasing and profitable.

Though there is a remorseless exactness about his criticisms which makes one feel as if the writing of proper English were a hopeless attempt, there is really nothing of the true pedant about him any more than there is about the sturdy Dean himself. Both volumes are equally free from pedantry, and both, though in different senses, we can recommend to all who take any interest in the subject.

THE LONDON CHRISTIAN TIMES.

THERE are but few of our readers, we presume, who have not already heard of this work ; but we are nevertheless glad of an opportunity of expressing the opinion we entertain of its merits, and of urging the perusal of it upon all our friends, especially upon those who have read '*The Queen's English.*' The raciness and smartness of these criticisms invest a dry subject with interest. The frequent discomfiture of the warlike Dean will amuse all persons, and we have no doubt that the contents of this book will enliven many a fireside during these long, dark, winter evenings. We shall be mistaken if the perusal of it does not lead, amongst the members of many domestic circles, to a good-humoured criticism, for a time, of each other's words and sentences. The result will be increasing correctness in the phraseology employed ; and that the end of both the Dean and his critic will be in some good degree realised.

We have spoken of "the *discomfiture* of the "warlike Dean," and we cannot doubt, that, on the whole, this word fitly describes the result of this smart passage of arms. The Dean advanced with the bearing of one who deemed that he had no superior, if indeed, any equal. He did not imagine that anyone would be found daring enough to confront him, and to dispute the positions he had assumed. Mr. Moon, with little delay or ceremony, attacked and repulsed him ; caring nothing for offended dignity, or anything else, save the vindication of the truth. It is impossible not to see that he is fond of a brush. He goes about his work and prosecutes it *con amore*.

Scarcely a page occurs in this small volume in which the Dean is not proved to have fallen into errors, either of grammar, construction, orthography, or pronunciation. Whenever he shall write again in defence of the Queen's English, he will, no doubt, write with greater care. He has done the public good service by introducing the subject ; but the advantage gained will be owing, in a very great degree, to the criticisms of his accomplished and keen-eyed antagonist.

THE NONCONFORMIST.

THERE is really something quite refreshing about Mr. Moon's *brochures*. He must excuse our confessing to a slight sense of amusement, on a first perusal of his strictures on the Dean.

The spirit of hearty vehemence by which they were pervaded only failed to elicit our complete sympathy, because it seemed to us that the object of so vigorous an assault was after all a "man of straw". The faults of style, and even of grammatical structure, in Dean Alford's essays, were so obvious that a less grave mode of exposure would have seemed to us more appropriate. However, we thank Mr. Moon very cordially for what he has done, and have no hesitation in saying that he has so far succeeded in his vindication of pure and correct, as opposed to lax and slipshod, English, as to deserve the gratitude of those who, like ourselves, deem our mother tongue, in all its restraints as well as in all its liberties, to be one of the most precious inheritances of Englishmen.

THE PATRIOT.

ONE would have thought that the Dean, in replying to animadversions upon his style, would have written with especial care; instead of this, his second article contains more and grosser faults than his first. The Dean boldly avows his disrespect for Lindley Murray, treats him with as little reverence as Colenso treats Moses, and forthwith proceeds, somewhat flagrantly, to exemplify his boasted ignorance of the wholesome rules according to which all of good English that we knew at school was flogged into us. Had this been the Dean's schoolboy experience

too, we cannot help thinking that it would have been better for him now. Mr. Moon gives the Dean a severe castigation for more than offences against the Queen's English ; and we are bound, in justice, to say that the Dean has fairly provoked it. Had he been a little less self-opinionated, and a little more respectful towards one who appears to have addressed him, in the first instance, with all gentlemanly courtesy, Mr. Moon would not, probably, have appeared in print. As it is, while we cannot altogether extenuate the tone of Mr. Moon's second letter, we are compelled to say that Dean Alford's paper singularly lacks both the simplicity of a great mind and the deference of a great scholar. Mr. Moon is no meddling ignoramus. He is by no means impeccable himself ; but, as a master of the English language, he is far superior to the Dean.

THE ENGLISH JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

THE Dean of Canterbury, apparently desirous of emulating a fellow-dignitary, whose hearty and learned labours in the mine of our language have opened up veins of richness few ever dreamed of, has published an article entitled '*A Plea for the Queen's English*'. The work we review is a reply to the Dean's production. We are greatly obliged to Mr. Moon for taking up the matter. It would have been a pity to have allowed the Dean to escape

a castigation he deserved. We do not expect the physician who attends us to be exempt from all complaints at all times. He is mortal, and subject to mortal ills. But if we find him giving us advice as to a course of physic or diet, which course he himself does not follow when he is similarly afflicted, we give him credit for either insincerity or ignorance. The Dean sets himself up as a healer of the sicknesses brought by careless habit on the "Queen's "English"; but, while pointing out those complaints and prescribing their remedies, he was labouring under similar maladies, whose existence in himself he utterly ignored, or represented as virtues rather than otherwise, when Mr. Moon privately pointed them out to him. Such a doctor merits no confidence, and the exposure of his incapacity is a public good. In light, lively writing, strict correctness of diction and arrangement is not requisite. For our recreation reading, the stately periods of Robertson would be intolerable; but Dickens's brilliant page, utterly ignoring stops and violating all rules of composition, is delightfully fresh and grateful. Dashing leaders in the papers we do not expect to find reducible to strict principles like those laid down by Kames or Campbell. But when a man seriously pretends to be writing to amend faults, his own style should be faultless, especially when he speaks in the tone of calm, self-assured superiority to vulgar error which the Dean of Canterbury assumes. It would occupy too

much space were we to give a *résumé* of the contents of Mr. Moon's clever work. We coincide with all his strictures on the Dean's article, and do not doubt that, with ourselves, he could have pointed to many more egregious blunders on the part of this new would-be critic. We advise all our readers to see Mr. Moon's reply. Written in pure, forcible, elegant, and classic English—perfect in composition and punctuation, and in its gentlemanly dignity so opposed to the slipshod, half-vulgar easiness of the Dean's '*Plea*'—it merits the attention of all students of our tongue, and shows that though in familiar talk and writing we may be as men at home—free and at our ease—there is not wanting amongst us that covert stateliness and rigid propriety which a weighty subject demands.

THE EDUCATIONAL TIMES.

THIS is a continuation of the now somewhat notorious controversy between Dean Alford and Mr. Washington Moon, on certain points arising out of the publication of the Dean's '*Plea for the Queen's English*', which Mr. Moon seems to have considered to be itself far from free from the very faults of grammar and diction it professed to hold up to reprobation. We think that in this linguistic passage of arms Mr. Moon has decidedly the best of it.

THE DAILY NEWS.

DEAN ALFORD could hardly have reflected upon what he was about to do when he sat down to write an easy, gossipy sort of paper for '*Good Words*' on the subject of common errors in speaking and in writing English. He certainly did not expect his free remarks to be so sharply challenged as they have been. And he finds himself engaged in a kind of controversy for which neither his natural turn of mind, nor his particular training has fitted him. His own style is at times so poor, so loose in the joints, so deficient in clear and sensitive perception of the proper force of words, that people have naturally wondered as to how this writer, above all others, could have been led to assume the critic's function. He sticks to it, however; revises and republishes his strictures, and seems not to have the least idea that he has been beaten in the battle. Mr. Moon, therefore, his foremost antagonist, gives him here the benefit of a third letter in answer to his '*Plea Number Three*.' The Dean is clearly in error in his contempt for the grammarians. He might very properly enlighten them if he could show that they have framed some of their rules on too narrow grounds, but he is himself a warning example against the neglect of regular English teaching in our great schools. It may be hoped that he will improve—he certainly ought under Mr. Moon's instructions.

THE NEWSMAN.

GREATLY as we fear that the Dean of Canterbury has failed to establish his claim to be regarded as an authority on the Queen's English, we, by no means, regret the appearance of his present work ; and for this reason—had there never been '*The Queen's English*', there would probably never have been '*The Dean's English*' ; and had there never been '*The Dean's English*', the world would have lost a very valuable contribution to English philology, and one of the most masterly pieces of literary criticism in the language.

THE CAMBRIDGE INDEPENDENT PRESS.

IT is written with a power of sarcasm and criticism rarely excelled. Mr. Moon is a brilliant writer ; his work is full of point, sound in English, and deserves to be generally read.

THE SUNDAY TIMES.

MR. MOON has rendered a real service to literature in this exposure of Dean Alford, and we are glad to express our recognition of the value of his labours.

THE MORNING ADVERTISER.

IT is one of the smartest pieces of prose-criticism we have chanced to meet with for many a day.

THE COURT CIRCULAR.

ALL who are interested in such critical discussions as are so clearly and accurately carried on in this little book will be grateful to Mr. Moon, not only for much solid instruction, but for much entertainment also.

PUBLIC OPINION.

A CRITICAL study of the English language is always a pleasant task; it is here rendered doubly agreeable by the happy style of the author of '*The Dean's English*'.



THE DEAN'S ENGLISH: A CRITICISM.

TO THE VERY REV. HENRY ALFORD, D.D.,
DEAN OF CANTERBURY.

REV. SIR,

On the publication of your '*Plea for the Queen's English*'* I was surprised to observe inaccuracies in the structure of your sentences and more than one grammatical error. Under ordinary circumstances I should not have taken notice of such deviations from what is strictly correct in composition; but the subject of your essay being the Queen's English, my attention was naturally drawn to the

* '*A Plea for the Queen's English*', by the Dean of Canterbury: '*Good Words*', March, 1863.

language you had employed ; and as, when I privately wrote to you respecting it, you justified your use of the expressions to which I had referred, I am desirous of knowing whether such expressions are really allowable in writings, and especially whether they are allowable in an essay which has for its object the exposure and correction of literary inaccuracies. I therefore *publish* this my second letter to you ; and I do so to draw forth criticism upon the rules involved in this question ; that, the light of various opinions being made to converge upon these rules, their value or their worthlessness may thereby be manifested. I make no apology for this course ; for when, by your violations of syntax and your defence of those violations, you teach that Campbell's '*Philosophy of Rhetoric*', Kames's '*Elements of Criticism*', and Blair's '*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*' are no longer to be our guides in the study of the English language, no apology is needed from me for asking the public whether they confirm the opinion that these hitherto ac-

knowledged authorities should be superseded.

To spread this enquiry widely is the more necessary, because, on account of the position which you hold, and the literary reputation which you enjoy, your modes of expression, if suffered to pass unchallenged, will, probably, by-and-by be quoted in justification of the style of other writers who shall presume to damage by example, if not by precept, the highway of thought over which all desire to travel.

By influential example it is that languages are moulded into whatever form they take; therefore, according as example is for good or for evil, so will a language gain in strength, sweetness, precision, and elegance, or will become weak, harsh, unmeaning, and barbarous. Great writers may make or may mar a language. It is with them, and not with grammarians, that the responsibility rests; for language is what custom makes it; and custom is, has been, and always will be, more influenced by example than by precept.

Dr. Campbell on the formation of languages.

Dr. Campbell, speaking of the formation of languages, justly says: *—“ Language “ is purely a species of fashion, in which “ by the general, but tacit, consent of the “ people of a particular state or country, “ certain sounds come to be appropriated “ to certain things as their signs, and “ certain ways of inflecting and combining “ those sounds come to be established as “ denoting the relations which subsist “ among the things signified. It is not “ the business of grammar, as some critics “ seem preposterously to imagine, to give “ law to the fashions which regulate our “ speech. On the contrary, from its con- “ formity to these, and from that alone, it “ derives all its authority and value. For, “ what is the grammar of any language? “ It is no other than a collection of general “ observations methodically digested, and “ comprising all the modes previously and “ independently established, by which the “ significations, derivations, and combi- “ nations of words in that language are

* Campbell's ‘*Philosophy of Rhetoric*’, vol. i, book 2. chap. 1, 2.

“ascertained. It is of no consequence
“here to what causes originally these
“modes or fashions owe their existence—
“to imitation, to reflection, to affectation,
“or to caprice ; they no sooner obtain and
“become general than they are the laws
“of the language, and the grammarian’s
“only business is to note, collect, and
“methodise them.” “‘But,’ it may be
“said, ‘if custom, which is so capricious
“and unaccountable, is everything in
“language, of what significance is either
“‘the grammarian or the critic?’ Of
“considerable significance notwithstanding
“ing ; and of most then, when they con-
“fine themselves to their legal depart-
“ments, and do not usurp an authority
“that does not belong to them. The
“man who, in a country like ours,
“should compile a succinct, perspicuous,
“and faithful digest of the laws, though
“no lawgiver, would be universally ac-
“nowledged to be a public benefactor.
“How easy would that important branch
“of knowledge be rendered by such a
“work, in comparison with what it must

“be, when we have nothing to have recourse to, but a labyrinth of statutes, reports, and opinions. That man also would be of considerable use, though not in the same degree, who should vigilantly attend to every illegal practice that was beginning to prevail, and should evince its danger by exposing its contrariety to law. Of similar benefit, though in a different sphere, are grammar and criticism. In language, the grammarian is properly the compiler of the digest; and the verbal critic, the man who seasonably notifies the abuses that are creeping in. Both tend to facilitate the study of the tongue to strangers, and to render natives more perfect in the knowledge of it, to advance general use into universal, and to give a greater stability at least, if not a permanency, to custom, that most mutable thing in nature.”

“Thou” and “thee”. I have quoted these passages because they have direct reference to the subject under consideration; for I do not find fault with the critical remarks in your

essay. Many of them, it is true, are not new; but most of them are good, and therefore will bear re-perusal; yet, I must say, it was scarcely necessary to repeat in the March number of '*Good Words*', the meaning of "avocation" which Archbishop Whately had given in the same magazine in the previous August. And so far from its being "so well known "a fact" that we reserve the singular pronouns "thou" and "thee" "entirely for "our addresses in prayer to Him who is "the highest Personality", it is not a fact. These pronouns are very extensively and very properly used in poetry, even when inanimate objects are addressed; as is the case in the following lines from Coleridge's '*Address to Mont Blanc*':—

"O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon *thee*
 "Till *thou*, still present to the bodily sense,
 "Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
 "I worshipped the Invisible alone."

However, I shall not notice your critical remarks, for they are of only secondary importance. Very little can be added to

Influence of
popular
writers.

the canons of criticism already laid down; very much may be done for the permanent enriching of our language, by popular writers exercising more care as to the examples they set in composition, than as to the lessons they teach concerning it.

Throwing stones.

But, in literature especially, it has always been so much easier for authors to censure than to guide by example, and it has been thought by them so much better fun to break other authors' windows than to stay quietly at home taking care of their own, that the throwing of stones has long been a favourite amusement. Nor do we object to it, providing two things be granted: first, that the glass of the windows is so bad that the objects seen through it appear distorted; and, secondly that in no spirit of unkindness shall the stones be thrown, lest you not only break the author's windows, but also wound the author himself.

Persuasive teaching.

It must be admitted that there is in your essay so little of that "sweetness of "the lips" which "increaseth learning", that but a very small amount of good can

result to those whom you think to be most in need of improvement. You speak of "*the vitiated and pretentious style which passes current in our newspapers*". You sneeringly say, "*In a leading article of "The Times" not long since, was this beautiful piece of slipshod English*": then follows the quotation, with this remark appended, "*Here we see faults enough besides the wretched violations of grammar*"; and, "*these writers are constantly doing something like this*".* Then you say, "*Sometimes the editors of our papers*

* "When it is considered that in every newspaper of any pretensions there are articles, letters, and paragraphs, from thirty or fifty different pens, there is not much to be astonished at in occasional blunders. If the Dean knew more of newspaper matters he would be more charitable in his criticism. Is it fair to expect in a leading article composed at midnight, against time, and carried off to the printers slip by slip as it is written, the same rhythmical beauty and accuracy of expression as in any essay elaborated by the labour of many days for a quarterly review? Yet the English of the Dean, corrected and re-corrected, pales before that of '*The Times*' written perhaps by a wearied man at two in the morning."—*'The Christian News,' Glasgow.*

“fall, from their ignorance, into absurd mistakes”. Certainly not a very happy arrangement of words in which to remark upon the “absurd mistakes” of other people; for we ought to be as careful what our sentences suggest, as what they affirm; and we are so accustomed to speak of people *falling from* a state or position, that your words naturally suggest the absurd idea of editors falling from their ignorance.

Editors falling from their ignorance.

I submit it to the reviewers whether your sentence be not altogether faulty.

The words, “from their ignorance” should not come after “fall”, they should precede it. But, for the reason just given, the word “from” is objectionable in any part of the sentence, which would have been better written thus, Sometimes our editors, in consequence of their ignorance, fall into absurd mistakes. If you say that the defect in perspicuity is removed by the punctuation, I answer, in the language of Lord Kames, “Punctuation may remove an ambiguity, but will never produce that peculiar beauty which is

“perceived when the sense comes out
“clearly and distinctly by means of a
“happy arrangement”. The same high
authority tells us that a circumstance
ought never to be placed between two
capital members of a sentence; or if it
be so placed, the first word in the con-
sequent member should be one that
cannot connect it with what precedes. In
your sentence, unfortunately, the connec-
tion is perfect, and the suggestion of a
ridiculous idea is the result.

Nor is this the only instance of this
kind of faulty arrangement. You say,
“The great enemies to understanding
“anything printed in our language are
“the commas. And these are inserted by
“the compositors without the slightest
“compunction”. I should say that the
great enemy to our understanding these
sentences of yours is the want of commas;
for though the defective position of words
can never be compensated for by commas,
they do frequently help to make the sense
clearer, and would do so in this instance.
How can we certainly know that the words

“Composi-
tors with-
out the
slightest
compunc-
tion.

“without the slightest compunction” refer to “inserted?” They seem, by their order in the sentence, to describe the character of the compositors;—they are “without “the slightest compunction”. And then that word “*compunction*”; what an ill-chosen word of which to make use when speaking of *punctuation*. But this is only on a par with what occurs in the first paragraph of your essay, where you speak of people “mending their *ways*”; and in the very next paragraph you speak of the “Queen’s *highway*”, and of “*by-roads*” and “*private roads*”.

“Compositors without any mercy.”

But to return. Not only do you describe the poor compositors as beings “without “any compunction”; but also as beings “without any mercy”. The sentence runs thus: “These ‘shrieks’, as they have been “called, are scattered up and down the “page by compositors without any mercy”. I have often heard of “printers devils”, and I imagined them to be the boys who assist in the press-room; but if your description of compositors is true, these are beings of an order very little superior.

By-the-way, while noticing these ghostly ^{“Introduce the body”.} existences, I may just remark that immediately after your speaking of “things “without life”, you startle us with that strange sentence of yours—“I will introduce the body of my essay”. *Introduce the body!* We are prepared for much in these days of “sensation” writing; and the very prevalence of the fashion for that style of composition predisposes any one of a quick imagination, to believe for the instant that your essay on the ‘*Queen’s English*’ is about to turn into a ‘*Strange Story*’.

“But to be more serious” as you say in your essay, and then immediately give us ^{A man losing his mother in the papers.} a sentence in which the grave and the grotesque are most incongruously blended. I read, “A man does not lose his mother “now in the papers”. I have read figurative language which spoke of lawyers being lost in their papers, and students being buried in their books; but I never read of a man losing his mother in the papers: therefore I do not quite see what the adverb “*now*” has to do in the

sentence. Ah! stop a moment. You did not mean to speak of a man losing his mother in the papers. I perceive by the context that what you intended to say was something of this sort: According to the papers, a man does not now lose his mother; but that is a very different thing. How those little prepositions "from" and "in" do perplex you; or rather, how greatly your misuse of them perplexes your readers.

Misuse of
adverbs.

With the adverbs also you are equally at fault. You say, "In all abstract cases "where we merely speak of numbers the "verb is better singular." Here the placing of the adverb "merely" makes it a limitation of the following word "speak"; and the question might naturally enough be asked, But what if we *write* of numbers? The adverb, being intended to qualify the word "numbers", should have been placed immediately after it. The sentence would then have read, "In all "abstract cases where we speak of num- "bers merely, the verb is better singular." So also in the sentence, "I only bring

“forward some things”, the adverb “only” is similarly misplaced; for, in the following sentence, the words “Plenty more “might be said”, show that the “only” refers to the “some things”, and not to the fact of your bringing them forward. The sentence should therefore have been, “I bring forward some things only. Plenty “more might be said.” Again, you say “Still, though too many commas are bad, “too few are not without inconvenience “also.” Here the adverb “also”, in consequence of its position, applies to “inconvenience”; and the sentence signifies that too few commas are not without inconvenience besides being bad. Doubtless, what you intended was, “Still, “though too many commas are bad, too “few also are not without inconvenience.”

Blair, speaking of adverbs, says, “The Dr. Blair on
“fact is, with respect to such adverbs as
“*only, wholly, at least*, and the rest of that
“tribe, that, in common discourse, the
“tone and emphasis we use in pronoun-
“cing them, generally serves to show their
“reference, and to make the meaning

“clear; and hence we acquire the habit
“of throwing them in loosely in the
“course of a period. *But in writing*”,
[and I wish you to notice this, because it
bears upon a remark in your letter to me,]
“*But in writing, where a man speaks to*
“*the eye and not to the ear, he ought to be*
“*more accurate, and so to connect those*
“*adverbs with the words which they qualify*
“*as to put his meaning out of doubt upon*
“*the first inspection.*”

On the construction of
sentences.

In my former letter to you, I quoted as
the basis of some remarks I had to make,
the well known rule that “those parts of
“a sentence which are most closely con-
“nected in their meaning, should be as
“closely as possible connected in position.”
In your reply you speak of my remarks
as “the fallacious application of a supposed
“rule.” Whether my application of the
rule be fallacious or not, let others judge
from this letter; and as to whether the rule
itself be only “a supposed rule”, or whether
it is not, on the contrary, a standard rule
emanating from the highest authorities, let
the following quotations decide.

I read in Kames's 'Elements of Criticism', "Words expressing things connected in the thought, ought to be placed as near together as possible." Lord Kames's opinion.

I read in Campbell's 'Philosophy of Rhetoric', "In English and other modern languages, the speaker doth not enjoy that boundless latitude which an orator of Athens or of Rome enjoyed when haranguing in the language of his country. With us, who admit very few inflections, the construction, and consequently the sense, depends almost entirely on the order."

I read in Blair's 'Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres', "The relation which the words, or members of a period, bear to one another, cannot be pointed out in English, as in Greek or Latin, by means of terminations; it is ascertained only by the position in which they stand. Hence a capital rule in the arrangement of sentences is, that the words or members most nearly related should be placed in the sentence, as near to each other as possible; so as

“to make their mutual relation clearly appear.”

Other authorities.

See also ‘*Murray's Grammar*’, part 2, in the Appendix; likewise, ‘*The Elements of English Composition*’, by David Irving, LL.D., chapter 7; and the ‘*Grammar of Rhetoric*’, by Alexander Jamieson, LL.D., chapter 3, book 3.

Examples of the violation of the law of position.

As an illustrative example of the violation of this rule, take the following sentences. “It contained”, says Swift, “a warrant for conducting me and my “retinue to Traldragdubb or Trildrog-“drib, for it is pronounced both ways, “as near as I can remember, *by a party* “*of ten horse*.” The words in italics must be construed with the participle “conducting”, but they are placed so far from that word, and so near the word “pronounced”, that at first they suggest a meaning perfectly ridiculous.

Again, in the course of a certain examination which took place in the House of Commons in the year 1809, Mr. Dennis Browne said, the witness had been “ordered to withdraw from the bar in

“consequence of being intoxicated, by
“the motion of an honourable member.”
This remark, as might have been ex-
pected, produced loud and general laughter.
The speaker intended to say, that, “in
“consequence of being intoxicated, the
“witness, by the motion of an honourable
“member, had been ordered to withdraw
“from the bar.”

A similar error occurs in a work by Isaac D'Israeli. He meant to relate that, “The beaux of that day, as well as the women, used the abominable art of painting their faces”; but he writes, “The beaux of that day used the abominable art of painting their faces, as well as the women”!

In a recent number of a fashionable morning paper, there is a paragraph headed ‘A Dangerous Cow’, of which it is said not only that it tossed *several persons*, but that “it plunged and tossed about *the street* in a formidable manner”. It must indeed have been a dangerous cow.

In your essay, you say, “I remember “when the French band of the ‘Guides’

“were in this country, reading in the “‘*Illustrated News*’”. Were the Frenchmen, when in this country, reading in the ‘*Illustrated News*’? or did you mean that you remembered reading in the ‘*Illustrated News*’, when the band of the French Guides, &c.?

You also say, “It is not so much of “the great highway itself of the Queen’s “English that I would now speak, as of “some of the laws of the road; the by-“rules, to compare small things with “great, which hang up framed at the “various stations”. What are the great things which hang up framed at the various stations? If you meant that the by-rules hang up framed at the various stations, the sentence would have been better thus, “the laws of the road; “or, to compare small things with great, “the by-rules which hang up framed at “the various stations”.

So, too, in that sentence which *introduces the body* of your essay, you speak of “the reluctance which we in modern “Europe have to giving any prominence

“to the personality of single individuals “in social intercourse”; and yet it was evidently not of single individuals ⁱⁿ social intercourse that you intended to speak, but of giving, in social intercourse, any prominence to the personality of single individuals. Your language expresses a meaning different from that which was intended: just as does Goldsmith’s language when, in the following tautological sentence, he says, “The Greeks, fearing to be surrounded “on all sides, wheeled about and halted, “with the river on their backs.” Talk of Baron Munchausen! Why, here was an army of Munchausens. They “*wheeled about and halted, with the river on their backs.*”

Once more, you say, “When I hear a ^{A sentence with a squinting construction.} person use a queer expression, or pronounce a name in reading differently “from his neighbours, it always goes “down, in my estimate of him, with a “*minus sign* before it—stands on the side “of deficit, not of credit.” Poor fellow! So he falls in your estimation, merely

because when “reading differently from “his neighbours,” you hear him “pronounce a name”. Would you have him pass over the names without pronouncing them? The fact is, that in the very words in which you censure a small fault of another person, you expose for censure a greater fault of your own. The pronunciation of proper names is a subject upon which philologists are not in every case unanimous; and to differ where the wise are not agreed, if it be a fault, cannot be a great fault; but to publish a sentence like yours, having in it a clause with what the French call a “squinting construction”,* is to commit a fault such as no one would expect to find in ‘*A Plea for the Queen's English*’. The words “in reading”, *look two ways at once*, and may be construed either with the words which precede, or with those which follow. We may understand you to say, “pronounce a name in reading”; or, “in “reading differently from his neighbours”.

* “*Construction louche*”.

A more striking example of this ludicrous error could scarcely have been given.

Dr. Campbell, in speaking of similar instances of bad arrangement, says, "In Dr. Campbell on constructive ambiguity.
"all the above instances there is what
"may be justly termed a constructive
"ambiguity; that is, the words are so
"disposed in point of order, as to render
"them really ambiguous, if, in that con-
"struction which the expression first sug-
"gests any meaning were exhibited. As
"this is not the case, the faulty order of
"the words cannot properly be considered
"as rendering the sentence ambiguous,
"but obscure. It may indeed be argued
"that, in these and the like examples,
"the least reflection in the reader will
"quickly remove the obscurity. But
"why is there any obscurity to be re-
"moved? Or why does the writer require
"more attention from the reader, or the
"speaker from the hearer, than is abso-
"lutely necessary? It ought to be re-
"membered, that whatever application we
"must give to the words, is, in fact, so
"much deducted from what we owe to

“ the sentiments. Besides, the effort that
“ is exerted in a very close attention to
“ the language, always weakens the effect
“ which the thoughts were intended to
“ produce in the mind. ‘By perspicuity’,
“ as Quintillian justly observes, ‘care is
“ taken, not that the hearer *may* under-
“ stand, if he will, but that he *must*
“ understand, whether he will or not.’*
“ Perspicuity, originally and properly,
“ implies *transparency*, such as may be
“ ascribed to air, glass, water, or any
“ other medium through which material
“ objects are viewed. From this original
“ and proper sense it has been meta-
“ phorically applied to language; this
“ being, as it were, the medium through
“ which we perceive the notions and
“ sentiments of a speaker. Now, in cor-
“ poreal things, if the medium through
“ which we look at any object is per-
“ fectly transparent, our whole attention
“ is fixed on the object; we are scarcely
“ sensible that there is a medium which
“ intervenes, and we can hardly be said

* ‘*Instit*’. lib. viii. cap. 2.

“to perceive it. But if there is any
“flaw in the medium, if we see through
“it but dimly, if the object is imper-
“fectedly represented, or if we know it to
“be misrepresented, our attention is im-
“mediately taken off the object to the
“medium. We are then anxious to dis-
“cover the cause, either of the dim and
“confused representation, or of the mis-
“representation, of things which it ex-
“hibits, that so the defect in vision may
“be supplied by judgment. The case of
“language is precisely similar. A dis-
“course, then, excels in perspicuity when
“the subject engrosses the attention of
“the hearer, and the diction is so little
“minded by him, that he can scarcely
“be said to be conscious it is through
“this medium he sees into the speaker’s
“thoughts. On the contrary, the least
“obscURITY, ambiguity, or confusion in the
“style, instantly removes the attention
“from the sentiment to the expression,
“and the hearer endeavours, by the aid of
“reflection, to correct the imperfections
“of the speaker’s language.”

Perspicuity. In contending for the law of position, as laid down by Lord Kames, Dr. Campbell, and others, I do so on the ground that the observance of this law contributes to that most essential quality in all writings,—perspicuity; and although I would not on any account wish to see all sentences constructed on one uniform plan, I maintain that the law of position must never be violated *when such violation would in any way obscure the meaning*. Let your meaning still be obvious, and you may vary your mode of expression as you please; and your language will be the richer for the variation. Let your meaning be obscure, and no grace of diction, nor any music of a well-turned period, will make amends to your readers for their being liable to misunderstand you.

Emphasis. In noticing my remarks upon this part of the subject, you say, "The fact is, "the rules of emphasis come in, in interruption of your supposed general law "of position." Passing over the inelegant stuttering, "*in, in, in*," in this sentence, I reply to your observation. The rules

of emphasis, and what you are pleased to call “the *supposed* general law of “position”, are entirely independent of each other, and can no more clash than two parallel lines can meet. The rules of emphasis do *not* come “*in, in in-* “*terruption of the general law of position.*” A sentence ought, under all circumstances, to be constructed accurately, whatever may chance to be the emphasis with which it will be read. A faulty construction may be made *intelligible* by emphasis, but no dependence on emphasis will *justify* a faulty construction. Besides, if the sentence is ambiguous, how will emphasis assist the reader to the author's meaning? Where shall he apply the emphasis? He must comprehend what is ambiguous, in order that what is ambiguous may by him be comprehended, which is an absurdity.

Emphasis may be very useful to me in explaining to you my own meaning, or, in explaining another's meaning which I may understand; but it can be of no use to me to explain that which I do not

understand. When to correctness of position is added justness of emphasis, your words will be weighty; but when the first of these qualities is wanting, not the thunder of a Boanerges will compensate for the deficiency.

“And they did eat.” An amusing instance of wrong emphasis in reading the Scriptures was thus given in a recent number of ‘*The Reader*’. “A clergyman, in the course of the church service, coming to verses 24 and 25 of “1 Sam. xxviii, which describe how Saul, “who had been abstaining from food in “the depth of his grief, was at last “persuaded to eat, read them thus: ‘And “‘the woman had a fat calf in the house; “‘and she hasted, and killed it, and took “‘flour, and kneaded it, and did bake “‘unleavened bread thereof: and she “‘brought it before Saul, and before his “‘servants; and they *did eat*’”.

Unallowable ellipses.

Continuing my review of your essay, I notice that it is said of a traveller on the Queen’s highway, “He bowls along “it with ease in a vehicle which a few “centuries ago would have been broken

“to pieces in a deep rut, or come to grief “in a bottomless swamp.” There being here no words immediately before “come”, to indicate in what tense that verb is, I have to turn back to find the tense, and am obliged to read the sentence thus, “*would have been* broken to pieces in a “deep rut, or (*would have been*) come to “grief in a bottomless swamp”; for, a part of a complex tense means nothing without the rest of the tense; therefore, the rest of the tense ought always to be found in the sentence. Nor is it allowable, as in your sentence, to take *part* of the tense of a passive verb to eke out the meaning of an active verb given without any tense whatever.

Further on, I find you speaking of The source of mistakes. “that fertile source of mistakes among “our clergy, the mispronunciation of “Scripture proper names”. It is not the “mispronunciation of Scripture pro-“per names” which is *the source* of mis-
takes; the mispronunciation of Scripture proper names constitutes the mistakes themselves of which you are speaking;

and a thing cannot at the same time be a source, and that which flows from it. It appears that what you intended to speak of was "that fertile source of mistakes among our clergy, their ignorance of "Scripture proper names, the mispronunciation of which is quite inexcusable."

Pronunciation of Greek proper names.

Speaking on this subject, I may remark that, as you so strongly advocate our following the Greeks in the pronunciation of their proper names, I hope you will be consistent and never again in reading the Lessons, call those ancient cities Samaria and Philadelphia otherwise than Samaria and Philadelphia.

Should the "h" in "humble" be aspirated?

I was much amused by your attempt to set up the Church '*Prayer Book*' as an authority for the aspiration of the "h" in the word "humble"; when, on the first page of the '*Morning Prayer*', we are exhorted to confess our sins "with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart". As for the argument which you base upon the alliterative style of the '*Prayer Book*'; that argument proves too much, to be in your favour; for if,

because we find the words “*humble*” and “*hearty*” following each other, we are therefore to believe that it was the intention of the compilers of our beautiful ritual that we should aspirate the “*h*” in “*humble*”, as in “*hearty*”; what was the intention of the compilers when, in the supplication for the Queen, they required us to pray that we “may faithfully serve, “*honour, and humbly obey her*”?

Towards the end of your essay you say, “*Entail* is another poor injured verb. “*Nothing ever leads to anything as a consequence, or brings it about, but it always entails it.* This smells strong of “*the lawyer's clerk*”. It was a very proper expression which Horace made use of when, speaking of over-laboured compositions, he said that they smelt of the *lamp*; but it is scarcely a fit expression which you employ, when, speaking of a certain word, you say, this smells strong of the *lawyer's clerk*. Lawyers or their clerks may be *odious* to you, but that does not give you the right to use an expression which implies that they are *odorous*.

The test
a scholar's
mastery
over the
language.

Just as we may know by the way in which a man deals with the small trials of life, how far he has attained a mastery over himself; so may we know by the way in which a writer deals with the small parts of speech, how far he has attained a mastery over the language. Let us see therefore how you manage the pronouns.

Pronouns. I begin by noticing a remark which, in your letter to me, has reference to this part of the subject. You say, respecting my criticism on your essay, "Set to work "in the same way with our English ver- "sion of the Bible, and what work you "would make of it"! To this I reply: Our English version of the Bible is acknowledged to be, on the whole, excellent, whether considered with respect to its faithfulness to the originals, or with respect to its purity and elegance of language. Its doctrines being divine, are, like their Author, perfect; but the translation, being human, is frequently obscure. You bid me look at the "he" and "him" in Luke xix, 3, 4, 5. You surely do not

defend the construction of these sentences ? See what Dr. Campbell says on this subject, in his '*Philosophy of Rhetoric*', book ii. chap. 6. "It is easy to conceive "that, in numberless instances, the pronoun 'he' will be ambiguous, when two "or more males happen to be mentioned "in the same clause of a sentence. In "such a case we ought always either to "give another turn to the expression, or "to use the noun itself, and not the pro- "noun ; for when the repetition of a word "is necessary it is not offensive. The "translators of the Bible have often ju- "diciously used this method ; I say "judiciously, because, though the other "method is on some occasions preferable, "yet by attempting the other, they would "have run a much greater risk of destroy- "ing that beautiful simplicity which is an "eminent characteristic of Holy Writ. "I shall take an instance from the speech "of Judah to his brother Joseph in "Egypt. 'We said to my lord, The lad "cannot leave his father, for if he should

“ ‘ leave his father, his father would die.’
 “ Gen. xliv, 22. The words ‘ his father ’
 “ are, in this short verse, thrice repeated,
 “ and yet are not disagreeable, as they
 “ contribute to perspicuity. Had the
 “ last part of the sentence run thus,
 “ ‘ if he should leave his father he
 “ ‘ would die ’, it would not have ap-
 “ peared from the expression, whether
 “ it were the child or the parent that
 “ would die ”.

Misuse of
pronouns.

A little attention to this matter would have saved you from publishing such a paragraph as the following;—“ Two other words occur to me which are very commonly mangled by our clergy. One of *these* is ‘ covetous ’ and its substantive ‘ covetousness ’. I hope some who read *these lines* will be induced to leave off pronouncing *them* ‘ covetous ’ and ‘ covetousness ’. I can assure *them* that when *they* do thus call *them*, one at least of *their* hearers has his apprehension of *their* teaching disturbed ”.*

* The *italics* are not the Dean’s.

You have so confusedly used your pronouns in the above paragraph, that it may be construed in ten thousand different ways.

In some sentences your pronouns have ^{Nouns.} actually no nouns to which they apply. For example, on page 192, "That nation". What nation? You have not spoken of any nation whatever. You have spoken of "the national mind", "the national "speech", and "national simplicity", things pertaining to a nation, but have not spoken of a nation itself. So also, on page 195, "a journal published by these "people". By what people? Where is the noun to which this relative pronoun refers? In your head it may have been, but it certainly is not in your essay.

The relation between nouns and pronouns is a great stumbling-block to most writers. The following sentence occurs in Hallam's '*Literature of Europe*':—"No "one as yet had exhibited the structure of "the human kidneys, Vesalius having

“only examined them in dogs”. *Human kidneys in dogs!* *

In a memoir of John Leyden, the shepherd boy, in ‘*Small Beginnings; or, the Way to Get On*’, there is, on page 104, the following passage:—“The Professor soon perceived, however, that the intellectual qualities of the youth were superior to those of his raiment”. *Intellectual qualities of raiment!*

A pronoun
too widely
separated
from its
noun.

In your essay, on page 196, you say, “I have known cases where it has been thoroughly eradicated”. “When I hear ‘a man gets to his *its*”, says Wm. Cobbett, “I tremble for him”. Now just read backwards with me, and let us see how many singular neuter nouns intervene before we come to the one to which your pronoun “*it*” belongs. “A tipple”, “a storm”, “the charitable explanation”, “the well-known infirmity”, “the way”, “ale”, “an apology”, “the consternation”, “their appearance”, “dinner”, “the house”, “the following incident”,

* Breen's ‘*Modern English Literature*’.

“his *ed*”, “a neighbouring table”, “a South-Eastern train”, “a Great Western”, “Reading”, “a refreshment-room”, “the *atmosphere*”, “the hair”, “the air”, “the cholera”, “his opinion”, “this vulgarism”, “energy”, “self-respect”, “perception”, “intelligence”, “habit”. Here we have it at last. Only twenty-eight nouns intervening between the pronoun “*it*”, and the noun “habit” to which it refers! I could give additional examples from your essay, but surely this is enough, to show that the schoolmaster is needed by other people besides the Directors of the Great Western and South-Eastern railways.

One word in conclusion. You make the assertion that the possessive pronoun “*its*” “never occurs in the English version of the Bible”. It is to be regretted that you have spoken so positively on this subject. Probably the knowledge of our translators’ faithfulness to the original text, and the fact of there being in Hebrew no neuter, may have led you

and others into this error; but look at Leviticus xxv, 5, "That which groweth "of *its* own accord", and you will see that "its", the possessive of "it", *does* occur "in the English version of the Bible".

I am, Rev. Sir,

Yours most respectfully,

G. WASHINGTON MOON.

London, April 1863

THE DEAN'S ENGLISH.

CRITICISM No. II;

IN REPLY TO THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY'S REJOINDER.

WHAT! is it possible that the Dean of ^{"Be courteous."} Canterbury can have so forgotten the Scriptural precept "*Be courteous*", as to speak, in a public meeting, in such a manner about an absent antagonist, that the language is condemned by the assembly, and the Dean is censured by the public press? Your own county paper, Reverend Sir, '*The South-Eastern Gazette*,' in giving a report of your second lecture* in St. George's Hall, Canterbury, makes the following observations: "Mr. G. W.

* Subsequently published in '*Good Words*', June, 1863.

“ Moon issued a pamphlet controverting
“many of the points advanced by the
“Dean, and showing that the reverend
“gentleman himself had been guilty of
“the very violations of good English
“which he had so strongly condemned in
“others. The greater portion of the
“Dean’s lecture on Monday evening was
“devoted to an examination of the state-
“ments made by Mr. Moon, and to a
“defence of the language employed by
“the Dean in his former lecture. Opin-
“ions differ as to the success of the
“reverend gentleman, many of his posi-
“tions being called in question; while
“the epithets which he did not hesitate
“to use in speaking of an antagonist
“possessing some acquaintance with the
“English language, were generally con-
“demned. These might and ought to
“have been avoided, especially by one
“whose precepts and example have their
“influence, for good or for harm, upon
“the society in which he moves. ‘Get
“‘wisdom, get understanding, and forget it
“‘not’, is a text that even the Dean of

“Canterbury might ponder over with “advantage”.

What, too, is to be said of that language “*Idiots.*” which, even in your calmer moments, you have not scrupled to apply to me? You had, in your former essay,* worded a sentence so strangely, that it suggested a meaning perfectly ludicrous. I called your attention to this, first in a private letter, and afterwards in a pamphlet,† and, in your ‘*Plea for the Queen's English, No. II*’, you indignantly exclaim, in reference to my remarks, “*We do not write for Idiots*”. Thank you for your politeness; I can make all excuses for hasty words spoken in unguarded moments; but when a gentleman deliberately uses such expressions *in print*, he shows, by his complacent self-sufficiency, how much need he has to remember that it is possible to be worse than even an idiot. “Seest thou a man wise in his own

* ‘*A Plea for the Queen's English*.—‘*Good Words*’, March, 1863.

† The previous letter is a re-publication of that pamphlet.

“conceit? there is more hope of a fool
“than of him”. Prov. xxvi, 12.

“A most
abnormal
elongation
of the auric-
ular appen-
dages.”

Continuing your remarks on my criticisms, you say, “It must require, to speak “in the genteel language which some of “my correspondents uphold, *a most abnormal elongation of the auricular appendages*, for a reader to have suggested to “his mind a fall from the sublime height “of ignorance down into the depth of a “mistake.” I spoke of editors falling *into* mistakes: it remained for the Dean of Canterbury to add, that they fell *down* into the *depth* of a mistake. You say you do not write for idiots; who else would imagine that it were possible to fall *up* into a *depth*? Reverting to your expression, “*abnormal elongation of the auricular appendages*”,—you recommended us, in your former essay, to use plainness of language, and when we mean a spade, to say so, and not call it “a well-known ob-“long instrument of manual husbandry”. I wonder you did not follow your own teaching, and, in plain language, call me *an ass*; but I suppose you considered the

language plain enough, and certainly it is : there can be no doubt as to your meaning. I must leave it to the public to decide whether I have deserved such a distinguished title. Recipients of honours do not generally trouble themselves about *merit* ; but, as I am very jealous for the character of him who has thus flatteringly distinguished me ; and as some captious persons may call in question his right to confer the title of *ass* ; I shall endeavour, in the following pages, to silence for ever all cavillers, and to prove, to demonstration, that he did not give away that which did not belong to him.

Of my former letter, you say that, "No case: abuse the plaintiff." when you first looked it through, it re-minded you of the old story of the attorney's endorsement of the brief,—"No "case: abuse the Plaintiff": for, the objections brought by me against the matter of your essay, are very few and by no means weighty ; as I have spent almost all my labour in criticisms on your style and sentences. Precisely ! I wished to show, by your own writings,

that so far were you from being competent to teach others English composition, that you had need yourself to study its first principles; but there is no *abuse* whatever in that letter: you had no precedent in *my* remarks for *your* language; and as for my having made but few objections to your essay, I will at once give you convincing proof that it was not because I had no more objections to make.

I had written the following paragraph before your second essay was published; and although, in that essay, you defend the statement you had previously made, I conceive that you have not by any means established your position.

How the cat jumps. I venture to assert that, what we say figuratively of some not over-wise people, we may say literally of you,—“ You do “not know how the cat jumps”; for, what do you tell us? You tell us that it is wrong to say, “The cat jumped on to the “chair”, the “to”, you remark, “ being “wholly unneeded and never used by any “careful writer or speaker.” With all due deference to such a high authority on such

a very important matter, I beg leave to observe that, when we say, "The cat "jumped on to the chair", we mean that the cat jumped from somewhere else *to* the chair, and alighted *on* it; but when we say, "The cat jumped *on* the chair", we mean that the cat was on the chair already, and that, while there, she jumped. The circumstances are entirely different; and according to the difference in the circumstances, so should there be a difference in the language used to describe them respectively. It is evident that in watching the antics of puss, you received an impulse from her movements, and you yourself *jumped—to a wrong conclusion.**

* The '*Edinburgh Review*', after objecting to some of my remarks as hypercritical, says, "It is not "meant that *all* Mr. Moon's comments are of this "kind. The Dean's style is neither particularly ele- "gant nor correct, and his adversary sometimes hits "him hard; besides in one or two cases successfully "disputing his judgments. On the important ques- "tion (for instance) whether we should say the cat "jumped '*on to* the chair', or '*on* the chair', we "must vote against the Dean, who unjustly condemns "the former expression."

“Honor”, “favor”, &c. Again, you say, “I pass on now to “spelling, on which I have one or two “remarks to make. The first shall be, “on the trick now so universal” [“so uni-“versal”! as if universality admitted of comparison] “across the Atlantic, and be-“coming in some quarters common among “us in England, of leaving out the ‘u’ in the termination ‘our’; writing *honor*, “*favor*, *neighbor*, *Savior*, &c. Now the ob-“jection to this is not only that it makes “very ugly words, totally unlike anything “in the English language before, but that “it obliterates all trace of the derivation “and history of the word.” * * * * “The “late Archdeacon Hare, in an article on “English orthography in the ‘*Philological* “‘*Museum*’, some years ago, expressed a “hope that ‘such abominations as *honor* “‘and *favor* would henceforth be confined “‘to the cards of the great vulgar.’ There “we still see them, and in books printed “in America; and while we are quite “contented to leave our fashionable friends “in such company, I hope we may none “of us be tempted to join it.” I will tell

you where else these "abominations" may be found, besides being found "on the "cards of the great vulgar". They may be found in a volume of poems by Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury; a volume published, not in America, but in this country, by Rivingtons of Pall Mall. The following is a specimen taken from his "RECENT POEMS". Two verses will suffice.

RECENT POEMS.

A WISH.

"Would it were mine, amidst the changes
"Through which our varied lifetime ranges,
"To live on Providence's bounty
"Down in some *favored* western county.

* * * * *

"There may I dwell with those who love me;
"And when the earth shall close above me,
"My memory leave a lasting *savor*
"Of grace divine, and human *favor*."

It is true that there is a preface to the volume, and that it accounts for the spelling of such words, by informing us that many of the poems have been published

in America ; but that is no justification of your retaining the Transatlantic spelling which you condemn. I *guess* you do not mean to imply that it is with poems as with people,—*i.e.*, that a temporary residence abroad occasions them to acquire habits of pronunciation, &c., not easily thrown off on a return to the mother country : and yet, if this be not what the preface means ; pray, what does it mean ? Perhaps, as mountain travellers brand certain words on their alpenstocks, to show the height that has been attained by those using them, so you have thought well to *favor* us with this *savor* of Americanisms, to show us that your poems have had the *honor* of being republished on the other side of the Atlantic.

It appears to me that the preface serves only to make matters worse ; for it shows that the objectionable form of orthography is retained with your knowledge and your sanction, for I have quoted from the “*Third Edition.*” How is this ? You say that the spelling in question should be confined to the cards of “*the great*

“vulgar”; and *you yourself* adopt that very spelling!

Before quitting the subject of the spelling of words of the above class, I beg leave to say that although there are, in our language, certain words ending in “*our*”, which, as we have seen, are sometimes spelt with “*or*” only; as *honor*, *favor*, &c., without interference with the sense, *honor* being still the same as *honour*, and *favor* the same as *favour*; there is one word of this class, the meaning of which changes with the change of spelling; namely, the word *tenour*, which, with the “*u*”, means continuity of state; as in ‘*Gray's Elegy*’,—

“Along the cool sequestered vale of life
“They kept the noiseless *tenour* of their way:”

but without the “*u*”, signifies a certain clef in music. This distinction has been very properly noticed by Dr. Nugent in his ‘*English and French Dictionary*’: there the word stands thus:—

“*Tenor, alto, m.*
“*Tenour, manière, f.*”

but you, after lecturing us upon the impropriety of leaving out the “*u*” in “*honour*”, and in “*favour*”, although the omission in these words makes no alteration in the sense, yourself leave the “*u*” out of “*tenour*”, and speak, on page 429, of the “*tenor*” of your essay! If this be not straining at gnats and swallowing a camel, I do not know what is. What with the *tenor* of your essay, and the *bass*, or baseness, of your English, you certainly are fiddling for us a pretty tune. It is to be hoped that if we do not dance quite correctly, to your new music, you will take into consideration the extreme difficulty we have to understand the contradictory instructions we have received.

“Open up”. Again, you censure the editors of newspapers for using the expression “*open up*”, and you say, “what it means more than “*open*” would mean, I never could dis-“*cover*”. Permit me to say that, if you look at home, you will find in your own periodical, in the identical number of it containing this remark of yours, two Doctors of Divinity using the very ex-

pression you condemn ; a third Doctor of Divinity using an expression very similar ; and a fourth, *yourself*, using an expression which, under the circumstances, is deserving of severe censure. To begin with the Editor ; the Rev. Norman Macleod, D.D., says, on page 204, "He *opens up* in the "parched desert a well that refreshes us". The Rev. John Caird, D.D., says, on page 237, "Now these considerations may *open up* to us one view of the expediency of "Christ's departure". The Rev. Thomas Guthrie, D.D., says, on page 163, "the "past, with its sin and folly, *rose up* before "his eyes". I suppose *you* would say, "What *rose up* means more than *rose* would "mean I cannot discover". Probably not, but just tell us what *you* mean by saying, on page 197, "Even so the language *grew up*" "Grew up" "up ; its nerve, and vigour, and honesty, "and toil, mainly *brought down* to us in "native Saxon terms". If the word *up* be redundant in the quoted sentences of the other learned Doctors, what shall we say of it in *your own*? In their expressions there is sense ; so, too, is there in

your expression ; but it is a kind of sense best described by the word *nonsense*. The language *grew up* by being *brought down* ! Sure, it must have been the *Irish* language that your honour was spāking of.

Neglect of
the study of
English.

Now for your reply to my letter. In condemnation of your wretched English, I had cited some of the highest authorities ;* and you coolly say, “I must freely “acknowledge to Mr. Moon, that not one “of the gentlemen whom he has named “has ever been my guide, in whatever “study of the English language I may “have accomplished, or in what little I “may have ventured to write in that lan- “guage”. “I have a very strong per- “suasion that common sense, ordinary “observation, and the prevailing usage of “the English people, are quite as good “guides in the matter of the arrangement “of sentences, as [are] the rules laid down “by rhetoricians and grammarians.” Thus we come to the actual truth of the matter. It appears that you really have never

* Dr. Campbell, Lord Kames, Hugh Blair, Lindley Murray, and others.

made the English language your *study*! All that you know about it is what you have picked up by "ordinary observation";* and the result is, that you tell us it is correct to say, "*He is* ^{"He is wiser than me".} *wiser than me*";† and that you speak of "*a decided weak point*" in a man's ^{"A decided weak point".} character! You must have a decidedly weak point in your own character, to set up yourself as a teacher of the English language, when the only credentials of qualification that you can produce are such sentences as these.

You sneer at "Americanisms", but you would never find an educated American who would venture to say, "*It is me*", for "*It is I*"; or, "*It is him*", for "*It is he*"; or, "*different to*", for "*different from*". And nowhere are the use and the

* "It is notorious that at our public schools 'every boy has been left to pick up his English 'where and how he could.'—Harrison 'On the English Language', preface, p. v.

† This subject was ably commented on by a writer in the 'English Churchman', and by a writer in the 'Glasgow Christian News'. See Appendix.

omission of the "h" as an aspirate, so clearly distinguished as in the United States.*

"The one rule of all others".

With regard to the purport of your second essay on the Queen's English, it is, as I expected it would be, chiefly a condemnation of my former letter; but you very carefully avoid those particular errors which I exposed; such as, "Sometimes the editors of our papers fall, from their ignorance, into absurd mistakes"; and, "A man does not lose his mother now in the papers". There are, however, in your second essay, some very strange specimens of Queen's English. You say, "The one rule of all others, which he cites". Now as, in defence of your particular views, you appeal so largely to common sense, let me ask, in the name of that common sense, How can *one* thing be *another* thing? How can *one* rule be *of all other* rules the one which I cite? If this be Queen's English, you may well say of the authorities I quoted, "There are more

* See 'Lectures on the English Language', by George P. Marsh, Minister of the United States at the court of the King of Italy.

"things in the English language than
 "seem to have been dreamt of in their
 "philosophy"; for I am quite sure that
 they never dreamt of any such absurdities.

In my former letter I drew attention to your misplacing of adverbs; and now you appear to be trying, in some instances, to get over the difficulty by altogether omitting the adverbs, and supplying their places by adjectives; and this is not a new error with you. You had previously said, "If with your inferiors, speak no *coarser* than usual; if with your superiors, *no finer*." We may correctly say, "a certain person speaks *coarsely*"; but it is absurdly ungrammatical to say, "he speaks *coarse*!" In your second essay, you say, "the words *nearest* connected", instead of, "the words *most nearly* connected"; but this will never do; the former error, that of position, was bad enough, it was one of syntax; the latter error, that of substituting one part of speech for another, is still worse. I have Adjectives and ad-
 spoken of your "decided weak point": I verba.

will now give another example, a very remarkable one, for it is an example of using an adjective instead of an adverb, in a sentence in which you are speaking of using an adverb instead of an adjective. You say, "The fact seems to be, that in "this case I was using the verb 'read' in "a colloquial and scarcely legitimate sense, "and that the adverb seems necessary, "because the verb is not a *strict* neuter- "substantive." We may properly speak of a word being not *strictly* a neuter-substantive; but we cannot properly speak of a substantive being "*strict*". So much for the grammar of the sentence; now for its meaning. Your sentence is an explanation of your use of the word "*oddly*", in the phrase, "would read rather oddly"; and *oddly enough* you have explained it; "*would read*" is the conditional form of the *verb*; and how can that ever be either a *neuter-substantive*, or a *substantive of any other kind*?

- In your former essay you prepared us to expect many strange things; I suppose we are to receive this as one of them.

You told us, "Plenty more might be said "about grammar; 'plenty that would "astonish some teachers of it. I may "say something of this another time.' Take all the credit you like; you have well earned it; for you have more than redeemed your promise; you have astonished other people beside teachers of grammar.

Again, you say, "The whole number is ^{"There are} one". "divided into two classes: the first class "and the last class. To the former of "these belong three: to the latter, one". That is, "To the former of these *belong* "three; to the latter [*belong*] one"; *one belong!* When, in the latter part of a compound sentence, we change the nominative, we must likewise change the verb, that it may agree with its nominative. The error is repeated in the very next sentence. You say, "There are three that are "ranged under the description 'first': and "one that is ranged under the description "last'." That is, "*There are* three that "are ranged under the description 'first'; "and [*there are*] one that is ranged under

“the description ‘last’.” *There are one!* The sentence cannot be correctly analysed in any other way. It is true we understand what you mean; just as we understand the meaning of the childish prattle of our little ones; but, because your sentence is not unintelligible, it is not, on that account the less incorrect. It appears to me that, before you have finished a sentence, you have forgotten how you began it. Here is another instance. You say, “We call a ‘cup-board’ a ‘cubbard’, “a ‘half-penny’, a ‘haepenny’, and so of “many other compound words”. Had you begun your sentence thus, *We speak of* a “cup-board” as a “cubbard”, of a “half-penny” as a “haepenny” it would have been correct to say, “*and so of* many “other compound words”; because the clause would mean, “and so [we speak] “of many other compound words”; but having begun the sentence with, “*We call*” it is sheer nonsense to finish it with, “*and so of*”; for it is saying, “and “so [we call] of many other compound “words”.

Elsewhere you say, "Call a spade 'a spade', not an oblong instrument of manual husbandry; let home be 'home', 'not a residence; a place a 'place', not a 'locality; *and so of* the rest." What is your meaning in this last clause? The sentence is undoubtedly faulty, whether the words "*and so of*" are considered in connexion with the first clause, or in connexion with the following one. In the former case we must say, "and [*speak*] so of the rest"; and in the latter case we must say, "and [*let us speak*] so of the rest". In neither case can we use the word "*call*", with which you have begun your sentence.

Here is another specimen of your "*Queen's English*", or rather of the Dean's English; a specimen in which the verbs, past and present, are in a most delightful state of confusion. You are speaking of your previous essay, and of the reasons you had for writing it; and you say, "If I had believed the Queen's English to have been rightly laid down by the dictionaries and the professors of rhetoric, I ^{"I need not have troubled myself".}

“need not have troubled myself to write about it. It was exactly because I did not believe this, but found both of them in many cases going astray, that I ventured to put in my plea.”

Now, “*I need not*” is present, not past; and it is of the past you are speaking; you should therefore have said, “*I needed not*”, or, “*I should not have needed*”. And the verb “troubled”, which you have put in the past, should have been in the present; just as the verb “need” which you have put in the present should have been in the past; for you were not speaking of what you would not have needed *to have done*, but of what you would not have needed *to do*. The sentence, then, should have been, “If I had believed so-and-so, *I should not have needed to trouble myself*”.

Professors walking off with the dictionaries.

I may notice also that, in the above sentence, you speak of rules laid down by the “*dictionaries*”, and the “*professors of rhetoric*”; thus substituting, in one case, the works for the men; and, in the other case, speaking of the men themselves. Why not either speak

of the “*compilers of dictionaries*”, and the “*professors of rhetoric*”; or else speak of the “*dictionaries*”, and the “*treatises on rhetoric*”? Write either figuratively or literally, whichever you please; or write in each style, by turns, if you like; for, variety in a series of sentences, where there is uniformity in each, is a beauty; but variety in a single sentence is merely confusion: witness the following extract from Gilfillan’s ‘*Literary Portraits*’:— “Channing’s mind was planted as thick “with thoughts as a backwood of his “own magnificent land.” *A backwood planted with thoughts!* What a glorious harvest for the writers of America! says Breen. However, I must not enter upon the subject of *style*, lest I should extend this letter to a wearisome length. Suffice it to say, you do not mean that you found the *professors of rhetoric walking off with the books*; though you do tell us you “*found both of them*” (the dictionaries and the professors of rhetoric) “*in many cases going astray*”.

Continuing my review, I have to notice “*A difficult-ty of him*”.

that you say, "His difficulty (and I mention it because it may be that of many others besides him) is that he has missed the peculiar sense of the preposition *by* as here used." Your difficulty seems to be, that you have missed seeing the *peculiar* sense (*nonsense*) of your own expressions. You tell us that you mention your correspondent's difficulty, because it may be a difficulty of many other people, besides being a difficulty of *him*!

The present
and future
of verbs.

Finally, as regards my criticisms on your grammar; you say, "The next point which I notice shall be the use of the auxiliaries '*shall*' and '*will*'. Now here we are at once struck by a curious phenomenon." We certainly are;—the phenomenon of a gentleman setting himself up to lecture on the use of verbs, and publicly proclaiming his unfitness for the task by confusing the present and the future in the very first sentence he utters on the subject.

The verb
"to pro-
gress".

Speaking of the verb "to progress", you say, "The present usage makes the

“verb neuter”, and, “We seem to want “it; and if we do, and it does not violate “any known law of formation, by all “means let us have it. True, it is the “first of its own family; we have not “yet formed *aggress*, *regress*, &c., into “verbs.” If you will allow me to *digress* from the consideration of your grammar to the consideration of your accuracy, I will show that you *transgress* in making this statement. In the folio edition of Bailey's ‘*Universal Dictionary*’, published in 1755, I find the very verbs, “*to ag-* “*gress*” and “*to regress*”, which you, in 1863, say “*we have not yet formed*”. In the same dictionary there is also the verb “*to progress*”; and it is given as a verb *neuter*. So that what you call “*the pre-* “*sent usage*” is, clearly, the usage of the *past*; the verb which you say is “*the first* “*of its own family*”, is nothing of the sort; “*to aggress*” and “*to regress*”, which you say “*we have not yet formed*”, are found in a dictionary published in 1755; and the neuter verb which you say “*we* “*seem to want*”, we have had in use more

than one hundred years! Nor are the verbs *aggress* and *regress* mere “*dictionary words without any authority for their use*”. The former is used by Prior in his ‘*Ode to Queen Anne*’; and the latter is used by Sir Thomas Browne in his ‘*Vulgar Errors*’.*

I will briefly notice a few of your numerous errors in syntax, &c., and then pass on to weightier matters. You speak “*Precluded in*” of a possibility being “*precluded in*” the mind. You tell us of “*a more neat way*

“*Expressing a sentence*”. “*of expressing* what would be *Mr. Moon’s sentence*”. We *express* a *meaning*, or we *write a sentence*; but we do not *express* a *sentence*. The word seems to be rather a pet of yours; you speak on page 198, of *expressing a woman!* ‘*Queer English*’ would not have been an inappropriate title to your essays. Then we have “*in respect of*”, for “*with respect of*”.

* For an account of the origin and gradual development of the words “*progress*”, “*digress*”, “*egress*”, “*regress*”, and “*transgress*”, see an interesting little book, called ‘*English Roots*’, by A. J. Knapp, p. 135.

“*to*”,* and “*an exception, which I cannot well treat*”, instead of, “*of which I can not well treat*”; for it is evident from the context, that you were not speaking of *treating an exception*, but of *treating of an exception*.

The construction of some of your sentences is very objectionable: you “say, I have noticed the word ‘party’ used for *an individual*, occurring in *Shakspeare*”, instead of, “I have noticed, in *Shakspeare*, the word ‘party’ used for *an individual*”. But how is it that you call a man *an individual*? In “*An individual*”.

your first essay on the Queen’s English you said, “It is certainly curious enough that the same *debasing* of our language should choose, in order to avoid the good honest Saxon ‘*man*’, two words, ‘*individual*’ and ‘*party*’, one of which expresses a man’s *unity*, and the other belongs to man *associated*.” It certainly

* This error is treated of at some length in ‘*Lectures on the English Language*’, by George P. Marsh, edited by Dr. William Smith, Classical Examiner at the University of London, pp. 467-9.

is curious ; but what appears to me to be more curious still, is that *you*, after writing that sentence, should yourself call a man "*an individual*!"

Again, I read, "The purpose is, to bring "the fact stated into prominence": *stated into prominence!* unquestionably, this should be, "to bring into prominence the "fact stated".

"Stated into prominence."
The natural order of constructing a sentence.

Even when writing on the proper construction of a sentence, you construct your own sentence so *improperly* that it fails to convey your meaning. You say, "The "natural order of constructing the sentence would be to relate what happened "first, and my surprise at it afterwards". Your sentence does not enlighten us on your views of the proper *order* in which the facts should be *related*; it tells us merely that we should relate what first happened, and your subsequent surprise at it. Not one word about the order of relation. We are to relate what "*happened first*" but we are not told what to *relate first*. You should have said, "The natural "order of constructing the sentence would

“be to *relate first* what happened, and “*afterwards* my surprise at it”. You go on to tell us that we ought not “to mislead “the reader, by introducing the possibility of constructing the sentence other-“wise than as the writer intended”. How much easier it is to preach than to practise! What do you wish us to understand by readers “*constructing*” the sentence? Writers *construct*; readers *construe*.

Lastly, on this part of the subject; you say, “Mr. Moon quotes, with dis-“approbation, my words, where I join “together ‘would have been broken to “‘pieces in a deep rut, or come to grief “‘in a bottomless swamp’. He says this “can only be filled in thus, ‘would have “‘been’”, &c. I am quite sure that Mr. Moon never, after mentioning your sentence about “*a deep rut*” and “*a bottomless swamp*”, speaks of the sentence being “*filled in*”! That is the Dean of Canterbury’s style; he gives a sentence about *eating* and *being full*, and then speaks of the sentence being “*filled up*”! He speaks

Incongruous association of ideas.

of people *mending their ways* ; and, in the very next paragraph, talks about the “*Queen's highway*” and “*by-roads*” and “*private roads*”. He speaks of things “*without life*”; and immediately afterwards says he will *introduce the body of*—his essay.

“*Dean's English*”.

You will, doubtless, gain great notoriety by your strange essays on the Queen's English ; for, in consequence of your inaccuracies in them, it will become usual to describe bad language as “*Dean's English*”. By “*bad language*”, I do not mean rude language ; I say nothing about that. I mean that, in consequence of your ungrammatical sentences, it will be as common to call false English, “*Dean's English*”, as it is to call base white metal, “*German Silver*.”

Eight-and-twenty nouns between a pronoun and its noun.

You say, “I have given a fair sample of the instances of ambiguity which Mr. Moon cites out of my essay”. A *fair* sample ! And yet you have made no mention of the instance of the eight-and-twenty nouns intervening between the pronoun “*it*” and the noun “*habit*”, to which it refers. A *fair* sample ! And

yet you have made no mention of the instance of ambiguity in the paragraph about "covetous and covetousness"; a

A paragraph of ten lines, yet with 10,240 different readings.

paragraph of less than ten lines, yet so ambiguously worded that you may ring as many changes on it as on a peal of bells; only the melody would not be quite as sweet. However, if you do not object to a little bell-ringing, and if you will not think it sacrilegious of me to pull the ropes, I will just see what kind of a peal of bells it is that you have hung in your belfry, for I call the paragraph, "*the belfry*", and the pronouns, "*the peal of bells*", and these I name after the gamut, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, so we shall not have any difficulty in counting the changes. You say, "While treating of "the pronunciation of those who minister "in public, two other words occur to me "which are very commonly mangled by "our clergy. One of ^A*these* is 'covetous', "and its substantive 'covetousness'. I "hope some who read *these lines*, will "be induced to leave off pronouncing "them ^B'covetous' and 'covetousness'. I

“ can assure *them* that when *they* do thus
“ call *them*, one, at least, of *their* hearers
“ has his appreciation of *their* teaching
“ disturbed”. I fancy that many a one
who reads these lines will have *his* appre-
ciation of *your* teaching disturbed, as far
as it relates to the Queen's English. But
now for the changes which may be rung
on these bells, as I have called them.
The first of them, “A”, may apply either
to “words”, or to “our clergy”. You
say, “*our clergy*. One of *these* is ‘covet-
“ous’’. I am sorry to say that the
general belief is, there are more than *one*;
but perhaps you know one in particular.
However, my remarks interrupt the bell-
ringing, and we want to count the changes,
so I will say no more, but will at once
demonstrate that we can ring 10,240
changes on your peal of bells! In other
words, that your paragraph, of less than
ten lines, is so ambiguously worded, that,
without any alteration of its grammar or
syntax, it may be read in 10,240 different
ways! and only one of all that number shall
be the right way to express your meaning

The Pro-nouns.	Nouns to which they may apply.	No. of Nouns.	No. of Different Readings.
A <i>these</i>	words, or clergy . . .	2 2
B <i>them</i>	words, clergy, readers, or lines	4	these 4 X by the above 2= 8
C <i>them</i>	words, clergy, readers, or lines	4	these 4 X by the above 8= 32
D <i>they</i>	words, clergy, readers, or lines	4	these 4 X by the above 32= 128
E <i>them</i>	words, clergy, readers, or lines	4	these 4 X by the above 128= 512
F <i>their</i>	words, clergy, readers, or lines	4	these 4 X by the above 512= 2048
G <i>their</i>	{ words, clergy, readers, lines, { or hearers . . .	5	these 5 X by the above 2048=10,240

This is indeed a valuable addition to the curiosities of literature: a treasure

“PRESENTED TO THE BRITISH NATION BY
“THE VERY REV. THE DEAN OF CANTER-
“BURY”. No doubt it will be carefully
preserved in the library of the British
Museum.

I have now, a serious charge to prefer against you; a charge to which I am reluctant to give a name. I will therefore simply state the facts, and leave the public to give to your proceedings in this matter, whatever name they may think most fitting. You say, on page 439, “I am reminded, in writing this, of a “criticism of Mr. Moon's on my remarks

The play of
Hamlet
with the
ghost left
out.

“ that we have dropped ‘thou’ and ‘thee’
“ in our addresses to our fellow-men, and
“ reserved those words for our addresses
“ in prayer to Him who is the highest
“ personality. It will be hardly believed
“ that he professes to set this right by
“ giving his readers and me the information
“ that ‘these pronouns are very extensively
“ ‘and profusely’ (I used no such word)
“ ‘used in poetry, even (!) when inanimate
“ ‘objects are addressed’: and thinks it
“ worth while to quote Coleridge’s Address
“ to Mont Blanc to prove his point! Really,
“ might not the very obvious notoriety of
“ the fact he adduces have suggested to
“ him that it was totally irrelevant to the
“ matter I was treating of?” Truly, this
is *the play of Hamlet with the ghost left*
out by special desire. Your object was to
controvert what I had advanced against
your essay; and, I must say, that the
means you have adopted to accomplish
that end, are, to speak mildly, not much
to your credit. I will prove what I say.
The one word, against which the whole of
my argument was directed, you have, in

reproducing your sentence, omitted from the quotation; and then, of the mangled remains of the sentence, you exclaim, "It "will be hardly believed that he professes "to set this right". I professed nothing of the sort; you must know well, that my attack was against *the one word which you have omitted*. That this was the case, may clearly be seen on reference to my former letter,* where that word was, and still is, *printed in italics*, to draw special attention to it. You betray the weakness of your cause when you have recourse to such a suppression.

Nor is the above instance of misquotation the only one in your essay. On page 429, you put into my mouth words which I never uttered; words which express a meaning totally at variance with what I said. You enclose the sentence in inverted commas to mark that it is *a quotation*; and, as if that were not enough, you preface that sentence with this doubly emphatic remark; "*these are his words not mine*". You then make me say that I hope "as I

Misquotation of an
opponent's words.

* Page 7.

“ so strongly advocate our following the “ Greeks in the pronunciation of their “ proper names, I shall be consistent, and “ never again, in reading the Lessons, call “ those ancient cities Samaria and Phila-“ delphia otherwise than *Samaria* and “ *Philadelphia*.” I never had any such thought, nor did I ever express any such wish. These words are *not* mine ; nor are they any more like mine, than I am like you. The original sentence, of which the above is a perversion, will be found on page 30 of my former letter.

Misrepres-
sentations.

But the part of my letter which you most fully notice in your reply, is that which treats of the arrangement of sentences ; and, exactly as you suppress, in the instance I have given, the *one important word* on which the whole of the argument turns ; so, in the matter of the arrangement of sentences, you suppress the *one important paragraph* which qualifies all the rest ! You privately draw the teeth of the lion and then publicly show how valiantly you can put your head into his mouth ; thus not only damaging your own character for

honesty of representation, but also insulting the intelligence of the public, who you imagine can be deceived by such childish performances. The following are the facts of the case. You say, after mentioning the authorities I had named, "The one rule of all others" (!) "which "he" (Mr. Moon) "cites from these au- "thorities, and which he believes me to "have continually violated, is this: that "those parts of a sentence which are most "closely connected in their meaning, should "be as closely as possible connected in "position". Or, as he afterwards quotes "it from Dr. Blair, 'A capital rule in the "arrangement of sentences is, that the "words or members most nearly related "should be placed in the sentence as near "to each other as possible, so as to make "their mutual relation clearly appear'". You then go on to say, "Now doubtless "this rule is, in the main, and for general "guidance, a good and useful one; indeed, "so plain to all, that it surely needed no "inculcating by these venerable writers. "But there are more things in the English

“language than seem to have been dreamt
“of in their philosophy. If this rule
“were uniformly applied, it would break
“down the force and the living interest of
“style in any English writer, and reduce his
“matter to a dreary and dull monotony ;
“for it is in exceptions to its application
“that almost all vigour and character of
“style consist”. Would any person—
could any person—in reading the above
extract from your reply to my letter, ever
imagine that that letter contains such a
paragraph as the following ? I quote from
page 26, where I say, “In contending for
“the law of position, as laid down by Lord
“Kames, Dr. Campbell, and others, I do
“so on the ground, that the observance of
“this law contributes to that most essen-
“tial quality in all writings—perspicuity ;
“and although I would not, *on any account*,
“wish to see all sentences constructed on
“one uniform plan, I maintain that the
“law of position must never be violated
“when such violation would *in any way*
“obscure the meaning. Let your meaning
“still be obvious, and you may vary your

“mode of expression as you please, and your language will be the richer for the variation. Let your meaning be obscure, and “no grace of diction, nor any music of a well-turned period, will make amends to your readers for their being liable to misunderstand you”. The existence of this paragraph, by which I so carefully qualify the reader’s acceptance of Dr. Blair’s law of position as a universal rule, you *utterly ignore*; and, with the most strange injustice, you charge me, through sentence after sentence, and column after column, of your tedious essay, with maintaining that all expressions should be worded on one certain uniform plan. Sentences so arranged are, you say, according to “Mr. Moon’s rule”. Sentences differing from that arrangement are, you say, a violation of “Mr. Moon’s rule”. With as much reasonableness might you leave out the word “*not*”, from the ninth commandment, and assert that it teaches, “Thou *shalt* bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

This being your method of conducting

a controversy, I assure you that, were you not the Dean of Canterbury, I would not answer your remarks. Doubtless, before the publication of this rejoinder, many of the readers of your second essay will have noticed the significant circumstance, that of the various examples you give of sentences constructed on what you are pleased to call “Mr. Moon’s rule”, but which, as I have shown, is only *a part* of “Mr. Moon’s “rule”, *not one example is drawn from Mr. Moon’s own letter.*

You say, “But surely we have had “enough of Mr. Moon and his rules”: I do not doubt that you have; but I must still detain you, as the Ancient Mariner detained the wedding-guest, until the tale is told. That being finished, I will let you go; and I trust that like him, you will learn wisdom from the past:—

“He went like one that hath been stunned,
 “And is of sense forlorn:
 “A sadder and a wiser man,
 “He rose the morrow morn.”

The date of
the intro-
duction of
“its” into
the Bible.

With respect to the date of the introduction of the possessive pronoun “*its*”,

which, you said, "never occurs in the "English version of the Bible"; and which, as I showed you, occurs in Leviticus, xxv. 5; you shelter yourself under the plea that you meant that the word never occurs in the "authorised edition", known as "King James's Bible". But, as you did not say either "*authorised edition*" or "*King James's Bible*", I am justified in saying that you have only yourself to blame for the consequences of having used language so unmistakably equivocal, as you certainly did when you said, "*the English version of the Bible*", and did not mean the English version now in every one's hands, but meant a particular edition published 252 years ago. Speaking of my correction of your error, you say, "What is to be regretted "is, that a gentleman who is setting "another right with such a high hand, "should not have taken the pains to ex- "amine the English version as it really "stands, before printing such a sentence "as that which I have quoted". I will

show you that my examination of the subject has been sufficiently deep to discover that yours must have been *very superficial*. Speaking of the word “*its*”, you say, “*its* apparent occurrence in the “place quoted is simply due to the King’s “printers, who have modernised the passage”. “*Apparent occurrence*”! It is a *real* occurrence. Are we not to believe our eyes? As for the “*King’s printers*”, it was *not* they who introduced the word “*its*” into the English Bible. The first English Bible in which the word is found, is one that was printed at a time when there was *no King on the English throne*, consequently when there were no “*King’s printers*”: it was printed during the Commonwealth. Nor was that Bible printed by the “printers to the Parliament”. Indeed, it is doubtful whether it was printed in this country. The word “*its*” first occurs in the English version of the Bible, in a spurious edition supposed to have been printed in Amsterdam. It may be distinguished from the genuine

edition* of the same date, 1653, by that very word “*its*”, which is not found in the editions printed by the “printers to “the Parliament”, or by the “King’s printers” until many years afterwards. So when, in your endeavours to escape the charge of inaccuracy contained in my former letter, you say that the introduction of the word “*its*”, into the English version of the Bible, is owing to the “*King’s* “*printers*”, you, in trying to escape Scylla, are drawn into the whirlpool of Charybdis!

You speak of my demolishing your character for accuracy. I do not know Misquotation of Scripture.

* The genuine edition contains most gross errors, for instance, in Rom. vi. 13, it is said, “Neither yield “ye your members as instruments of *righteousness*”, instead of “*unrighteousness*”; and, as if to confirm the above teaching, it is said, in 1 Cor. vi. 9, “the *unrighteous* shall inherit the kingdom of “God”; instead of “shall *not* inherit”. Complaint was made to the Parliament; and most of the copies now extant were cleared of the errors by the cancelling of leaves. The spurious edition is comparatively faultless.

but this I know, that whenever I see a man sensitively jealous of any one point in particular of his character, I am not often wrong in taking his jealousy to be a sure sign of conscious weakness in that very point. What are the facts of the case with regard to yourself? I have given several instances of your gross *inaccuracy*. I take no notice of unimportant misquotations of the Scriptures and of my own sentences, though I could mention several of each occurring in your second essay; but what are we to say of the following? It is, if intentional, which I cannot believe, the boldest instance of misquotation of Scripture, to suit a special purpose, that I ever met with. I am sure it *must* have been unintentional; but it is such an error, that to have fallen into it will, I hope, serve so to convince you that you, like other mortals, are liable to err; that the remembrance of it will be a powerful restraint on your indignation, if others should venture, as I have done, to call in question your accuracy. The singular instance of misquotation to which

I refer is the following.—Speaking of the adverb “*only*” and of its proper position in a sentence; you say, “The adverb “‘*only*’, in many sentences, where strictly “speaking it ought to follow its verb, and “to limit the objects of the verb, is in “good English placed before the verb. “Let us take some examples of this from “the great storehouse of good English, “our authorised version of the Scriptures. “In Numbers xii. 2, we read, ‘Hath the “‘Lord *only spoken* by Moses? hath He “‘not spoken also by us?’ According to “some of my correspondents, and to Mr. “Moon’s pamphlet (p. 12)*, this ought to “be, ‘Hath the Lord *spoken only* by “‘Moses?’ I venture to prefer very “much the words as they stand”. Now, strange as it may appear after your assertion, it is nevertheless a fact that the words, as you quote them, do *not* occur either in the authorised version, known as King James’s Bible of 1611, or in our present version, or in any other version that *I have ever seen*; and the words, in

* Page 14, in this Edition.

the order in which you say I and your other correspondents would have written them, *do occur in every copy of the Scriptures to which I have referred!* So you very much prefer the words as they stand, do you? Ha! ha! ha! *So do I.* When next you write about the adverb “*only*”, be sure you quote *only* the right passage of Scripture to suit your purpose; and on no account be guilty of perverting the sacred text; for these are not the days when the Laity will accept without proof, where proof is possible, the statements of even the Dean of Canterbury.

Why do you
call me an
ass?

Before closing this letter, I have just one question to ask; it is this: Why do you say I must have “*a most abnormal elongation of the auricular appendages?*” In other words, Why do you call me an ass? I confess to a little curiosity in the matter; therefore pardon me if I press the inquiry. Is it because the authorities I quoted are “*venerable Scotchmen*” and that therefore you conclude I must be *fond of thistles?*—No? Well, I will guess again. Is it because I *kicked* at

your authority?—No? Well, once more. Is it because, like Balaam's ass, I "*forbad the madness of the prophet*"? Still, No? Then I must give it up, and leave to my readers the solving of the riddle; and while perhaps there may be some who will come to the conclusion that the Dean of Canterbury calls me an ass because I have been guilty of *braying* at him; there are others, I know, who will laughingly say that the *braying* has been of that kind mentioned in Prov. xxvii. 22.

I am, Rev. Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

G. WASHINGTON MOON.

London, July, 1863.

NOTE.—The Dean of Canterbury having published a letter exonerating himself from the charge of courtesy, the following appeared in '*The Patriot*' newspaper, in answer to that letter.

THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PATRIOT.

“SIR,—Permit me to say, in reference to the letter from the Dean of Canterbury which you published in the last number of '*The Patriot*', that I heartily join you in your regret that any personalities should have intruded into this discussion on the Queen's English, and I gladly welcome from the Dean any explanation which exonerates him from the charge of courtesy. But I must say, in justification of my having made those condemning remarks which called forth the Dean's letter, that I was not alone in my interpretation of his language. Those who had the privilege of hearing the Dean deliver his '*Plea*', when there were all the accompanying advantages of emphasis and gesture to assist the hearers to a right understanding of the speaker's meaning, understood the epithets which he employed to be intended for me; and, as such, generally condemned them. My authority is '*The South-Eastern Gazette*', of May 19th, which published a report of the meeting.

"The Dean states, in his explanatory letter, that he intended the objectionable epithets not for me, but for the hypothetical reader supposed by me to be capable of the misapprehensions I had adduced. It happens, rather unfortunately for the Dean's explanation, that I had not spoken of any hypothetical reader. *Litera scripta manet*,—judge for yourself. I spoke not of what the Dean's faulty language might suggest to some imaginary reader, but of what it did suggest; and to whom, but to me? The hypothetical reader is entirely a creation of the Dean's. However as he says he intended the epithets for this said reader, that is sufficient. I am quite willing to help the Dean to put the saddle on his imaginary "ass"; and I think the Dean cannot do better than set the imaginary "idiot" on the said ass's back, and then probably the one will gallop away with the other, and we may never hear anything more of either of them.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours most respectfully,

"G. WASHINGTON MOON.

"*Sept. 12th, 1863.*"

“Instead of always fixing our thoughts
“upon the points in which our literature and
“our intellectual life generally are strong, we
“should, from time to time, fix them upon
“those in which they are weak, and so learn to
“perceive clearly what we have to amend.”—

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THE DEAN'S ENGLISH.

CRITICISM No. III.

THE CONCLUSION.

REV. SIR,

It gives me great pleasure to withdraw Withdrawal
of the
charge of
courtesy. the charge of courtesy contained in my former letter to you. I cordially accept the explanation you have given; and though I cannot quite reconcile your statements with all the facts of the case, I feel sure that the discrepancy is apparent, not real; and that you are sincere in saying you did not intend to apply to me those epithets of which I complained. But allow me to remark that for whomsoever they were intended, they are “objectionable”. Such figures of speech neither add weight to arguments, nor give dignity to language; they serve only to

illustrate how easy it is for a teacher of others to disregard his own lessons, and become oblivious of the fact that all teaching, like all charity, should begin at home.

A teacher is
always a-
menable to
criticism.

Actuated by a sincere love for the language which, it seems to me, you are injuring by precept and by example, I resume my criticisms on your essays. You constitute yourself a teacher of the Queen's English. Were it not so, I should consider any strictures on your language as simply impertinent; but as you have judged it to be right to lecture the public on certain improprieties of expression which have crept into common use; it cannot be out of place for one of the public whom you address, to step forward on behalf of himself and his companions, and test your fitness for the office you have assumed; especially if he confine his test to an examination of the language used in those very lectures themselves.

“Honor”
and
“favor”.

The only deviation which I have made from that course is in my second

letter. There, noticing your remarks concerning the practice of spelling without the “*u*” such words as “*honour*” and “*favour*”, I quote from your ‘*Poems*’ the words so spelt, and add some prefatory remarks of yours concerning them. In your third essay you speak of the above circumstance, and you inform me that the words “*honor*” and “*favor*”, which I quoted from your ‘*Poems*’, were from that part of the volume which was printed in America, and that it was against such American spelling that you, in your preface, protested.

Allow me to say, in explanation of my “^{A nu-}*cleus*”. having unconsciously quoted from the American part of the volume, that, as the preface stated that the poems which you added to the American edition were the products of “*later years*”, it was not unnatural for me to believe they were those headed “**RECENT POEMS**”: and it was from them that my quotations were made. Besides, you call the American part of the volume the “*nucleus*” of the edition: therefore, if I had taken my

examples of orthography from the commencement as well as from the end of the volume, I should have been justified in doing so; for, surely, a "*nucleus*" is that *around* which other matter is collected. You do indeed make a strange use of the word when you call 400 pages of a volume of poems the "*nucleus*" and leave only 29 pages at the end, to come under the description of "*conglobated matter*"! However, even in those few pages of *English* printing, which, according to your own confession, were under your control, I find the word honour spelt "*honor*", and the word odours spelt "*odors*". The charge, therefore, stands as it did; and your explanation has served only to draw more scrutinizing attention to an inconsistency which otherwise might have passed almost unnoticed.

"No more", and "never again". So you really defend your ungrammatical sentence, "If with your inferiors speak "no coarser than usual; if with your "superiors, no finer"; and you not only defend it, as allowable, but actually maintain that it is "*strictly correct*"; the

ground of your assertion being that you had “no choice” open to you between saying “speak no *coarser* than usual”, and “speak *no more coarsely* than usual”; and you objected to the latter expression because you believed it would have been ambiguous, owing to the term “*no more*” being capable of meaning “*never again*”. Are you not aware that a weak defence is a strong admission? It is true that “*no more*” sometimes signifies “*never again*”; but you well know that it never can have that signification when it is followed by “*than*”. The phrase “speak *no more* coarsely than usual” could never be understood as “speak “*never again* coarsely than usual”; for, such a sentence would be without meaning. Besides, if you feared that your sentence would be ambiguous with the expression “*no more than*”, why did you use that expression in other parts of your essays? For instance, you say, “The “Queen is *no more* the proprietor of the “English language than you or I”. A certain word, you say, “ought *no more* to

“be spelt ‘diocess’, *than* cheese ought to be spelt ‘chess’.” Where were your scruples about “*no more*” and “*never again*”, when you wrote these sentences? As for your having no choice between saying “speak *no coarser* than usual” and saying “speak *no more coarsely* than usual”; you certainly had not well considered the subject when you made this remark; for, neither of the expressions is the best that might have been used; indeed, the former is grossly ungrammatical; and as for the latter, to make it “*right to a t.*” you must change the “*no*” into “*not*”; and we shall then have what will be correct,—“*If with your inferiors speak not more coarsely than usual*”; or, “*do not speak more coarsely than usual*”.

Does
“than”
govern an
accusative?

You tell us that “*than*” governs an accusative case. What nonsense! If “*than*” governs an accusative, the translators of the Scriptures were wrong in making Solomon say, in Eccles. ii, 25, “Who can eat more *than I?*” They should have made him say, “Who can eat more “*than me?*” but even a child would tell

you that such an expression would be absurd, except under the supposition that Solomon was the king of the Cannibal Islands.

In your first '*Plea for the Queen's English*'^{"How nicely she looks".}, you laid it down as a rule that neuter verbs should not be qualified by adverbs, but by adjectives; *i.e.* we ought not to say "how nicely she looks", but "how nice she looks"; because, the verb "*to look*", as here used, is a neuter verb, one not indicating an action but merely a quality or state. Very well; but unfortunately your practice mars the good which otherwise might be done by your precept; for, "*to appear*" is as much a neuter verb as "*to look*" used as above; in fact it is but another form of expression for the same meaning; and yet, after ridiculing "young ladies fresh from "school", for saying "how nicely she "looks"; you yourself say that the account to be given of a certain inaccuracy "appears still more plainly" from the fact that, &c., &c. If I may be allowed to make a somewhat questionable pun, I,

will say that it appears to me more and more *plain* that you never more completely *missed* your vocation than when you began lecturing “boarding-school “*misses*” on the Queen’s English.

Adjectives
and adverbs

While remarking on your wrong use of adverbs, I may notice that you say “our Lord’s own use so frequently of the “term”. His use of a particular term may be said to have been *frequent*; but it cannot be said to have been “*frequently*.” Transpose the words in your sentence and you will see this at once. “Our “Lord’s own so frequently use of the “term”! Surely no boarding-school miss would ever write thus. It is the *verb* that requires the *adverb*; the *noun* requires the *adjective*. He *used* the term *frequently*; but his *use* of it was *frequent*.

The prepo-
sition
“from”.

In a former letter I called attention to your injudicious use of the preposition “*from*”; and I pointed out the necessity for guarding against suggesting any idea which has no real connexion with the matter of which you may be speaking. I gave, as an example of this kind of fault,

your sentence, "Sometimes the editors of "our papers fall, from their ignorance, into "absurd mistakes". Here the preposition "from", immediately following the verb "fall", suggests the absurd idea of editors *falling from their ignorance*. In your third essay you repeat the fault, and speak of "architectural *transition, from* the venerable front of an ancient cathedral". The sentence runs thus, "A smooth front "of stucco may be a comely thing for "those that like it, but very few sensible "men will like it, if they know that in "laying it on, we are proposing to ob- "literate the roughnesses, and mixture of "styles, and traces of architectural transi- "tion, from the venerable front of an "ancient cathedral." Here, if you per- ceived that the mere juxtaposition of the words "*transition*" and "*from*" was suggestive of an idea which you by no means intended to convey, you should have separated the words by transposing the last clause of the sentence. It might have been done thus;—"proposing "to "obliterate, from the venerable front of

“an ancient cathedral, the roughnesses
“and mixture of styles, and traces of
“architectural transition.” You may say
these are trifles; but, remember, “it is by
“attention to trifles that perfection is at-
“tained; and, perfection is no trifle.” Be-
sides, to quote your own words, “An error
“may be, in an ordinary person, a trifle;
“but when a *teacher* makes it, it is no
“longer a trifle.”

In your remarks on “*so*”, used in con-
nection with “*as*”, you say “‘*so*’ cannot
“be used in the affirmative proposition,
“nor ‘*as*’ in the negative”. If this be
correct, why do you yourself use “*as*”
in the negative? You say “‘*its*’ was never
“used in the early periods of our language,
“nor, indeed, *as late down as Elizabeth.*”

But I suppose it is almost useless for
me to address you on the subject of the
various niceties of arrangement which re-
quire to be attended to in the construction
of sentences. You seem to care for none
of these things. Yet, believe me, such
matters, unimportant as they may appear,
contribute in a far greater degree than

'you imagine, to make up the sum of the difference between a style of composition which is ambiguous and inelegant; and one which is perspicuous and chastely correct.

You evidently entertain some fear lest ^{A groundless fear.} the study of the rules of composition should cramp the expression of the thoughts! Never was there a more groundless apprehension: and in proportion as you are successful in disseminating such notions, do you inflict on our language the most serious injury. Fortunately for that language, the poison of your teaching carries with it its own antidote. They who read your essays on the Queen's English cannot fail to notice the significant fact that he who is thus strongly advocating the principle that the rules of composition serve no other purpose than to "cramp the expression of "his thoughts", does not exhibit that fluency and gracefulness of diction which, if his view of the matter were correct, would necessarily be displayed in his own compositions.

A reviewer in '*The Nonconformist*' writes

as follows:—“ Away with all needless and “ artificial rules, say we, indeed—as ener-“ getically as the most energetic. But “ the elementary and natural laws of a “ language fetter only the impatient or the “ unskilful; and in the living freedom “ with which genius obeys those laws, is “ its strength and mastery shown.

‘ The.....unchartered freedom tries,’

“ says Wordsworth, in vindicating the “ self-imposed bondage of the Sonnet ; “ and in so saying, he enunciated a prin-“ ciple no less philosophically human than “ wide in its application.”

What was John Milton’s opinion on this subject? Was *he* opposed to rules and maxims? Did *he* think they served no other purpose than to “ cramp the “ expression of the thoughts”? Quite the contrary.

In the year 1638, Milton, in a Latin letter addressed to an Italian scholar who was then preparing a work on the grammar of his native tongue, wrote as follows: “ Whoever in a state knows how to form

“wisely the manners of men and to rule
“them at home and in war by excellent
“institutes, him in the first place, above
“others, I should esteem worthy of all
“honour; but next to him the man who
“strives to establish in maxims and rules
“the method and habit of speaking and
“writing derived from a good age of the
“nation, and, as it were, to fortify the same
“round with a kind of wall, the daring to
“overleap which, a law, only short of that
“of Romulus, should be used to prevent.
“Should we choose to compare the two in
“respect to utility, it is the former only
“that can make the social existence of the
“citizens just and holy; but it is the
“latter that makes it splendid and beauti-
“ful, which is the next thing to be desired.
“The one, as I believe, supplies a noble
“courage and intrepid counsels against an
“enemy invading the territory; the other
“takes to himself the task of extirpating
“and defeating, by means of a learned
“detective police of ears and a light in-
“fantry of good authors, that barbarism
“which makes large inroads upon the

“minds of men, and is a destructive intestine enemy to genius. Nor is it to be considered of small importance what language, pure or corrupt, a people has, or what is their customary degree of propriety in speaking it—a matter which oftener than once was the salvation of Athens: nay, as it is Plato’s opinion that by a change in the manner and habit of dress serious commotions and mutations are portended in a commonwealth, I, for my part, would rather believe that the fall of that city and its low and obscure condition followed on the general vitiation of its usage in the matter of speech; for, let the words of a country be in part unhandsome and offensive in themselves, in part debased by wear and wrongly uttered, and what do they declare but, by no light indication, that the inhabitants of that country are an indolent, idly-yawning race, with minds already long prepared for any amount of servility? On the other hand, we have never heard that any empire, any state, did not flourish in at least a

“middling degree as long as its own liking
“and care for its language lasted.”

So far John Milton—the noble advocate of law and rule, though in virtue of the transcendency of his genius he might have claimed to be above all rules. Now let us have a specimen of your English,— the English of the Dean of Canterbury, who, avowedly, disregards all rules, *fearing they would “cramp the expression of his thoughts”!*

The following example is taken from your third essay. I read, “‘*this*’ and ‘*these*’ refer to persons and things present, or “under immediate consideration; ‘*that*’ and ‘*those*’ to persons and things not “present nor under immediate consideration; *or, if either of these, one degree further removed than the others of which are used ‘this’ and ‘these’*”. What can be the meaning of this last clause? The reader can only wonder and guess. It utterly defies all power of analysis, and really makes one uncomfortable to read it. It forcibly recalls the following anecdote told of Douglas Jarrold. “On recovering ^{An anecdote of Douglas Jerrold.} from a severe illness, Browning’s ‘*Sordello*’

“was put into his hands. Line after line, “page after page, he read, but no consecutive idea could he get from the mystic “production. Mrs. Jerrold was out, and “he had no one to whom to appeal. The “thought struck him that he had lost his “reason during his illness, and that he “was so imbecile he did not know it. A “perspiration burst from his brow, and he “sat silent and thoughtful. As soon as “his wife returned, he thrust the mys- “terious volume into her hands, crying out, “‘Read this, my dear’! After several “attempts to make any sense out of the “first page or so, she gave back the book, “saying, ‘Bother the gibberish! I don’t “understand a word of it’. ‘Thank “‘Heaven’, cried Jerrold, ‘then I am not “‘an idiot’’!

‘The Edinburgh Review’ thus speaks of the poem:—“This poem is, in our judgment, from its confused and tortuous style of expression, the most illegible production of any time or country. “Every kind of obscurity is to be found “in it. Infinitives without their particles

“—suppression of articles definite and
“indefinite—confusion and suppression of
“pronouns relative and personal—adjec-
“tives pining for their substantives—
“verbs in an eternal state of suspense for
“their subjects—elisions of every kind—
“sentences prematurely killed off by
“interjections, or cut short in their
“career by other sentences—parentheses
“within parentheses—prepositions some-
“times entirely divorced from their
“nouns—*anacoloutha*, and all kinds of
“abnormal forms of speech, for which
“grammarians have ever invented names
“—oblique narrations, instead of direct—
“and puzzling allusions to obscure persons
“and facts disinterred from *Muratori* or
“*Tiraboschi*, as though they were perfectly
“familiar to the reader. Indeed, to be
“compelled to look at a play through
“a pair of horn spectacles would be a
“cheerful pastime compared with the
“ennui of tracing the course of ‘*Sordello*’
“through that veil of obscurity which
“Mr. Browning’s style of composition
“places between us and his conception.”

‘*The Saturday Review*,’ in commenting on these remarks, says, “It is but just to “Mr. Browning to state that the poem is “only a youthful sketch, and that Mr. “Browning himself has acknowledged its “many faults of expression, and has “explained why he thought it profitless to “try to rectify them.”

Incomplete sentence.

Here is another specimen from your essay; I give the entire sentence, which, closing with a period, should be complete in its sense. You say, “The next thing “I shall mention, not for its own sake, “but as a specimen of the kind of criti- “cism which I am often meeting with, “and instructive to those who wish to be “critics of other men’s language.”

It was not until I had long and hopelessly pondered over your sentence, that I discovered what it was you intended to say, and what was the reason of my not instantly catching your meaning. I find that the first clause in your sentence is inverted, and that the punctuation necessary to mark the inversion is incorrect, or rather, is altogether omitted; hence, I

read the sentence thus,—“The next thing” [which] “I shall mention, not for its own “sake, but as a specimen,” &c.; whereas your meaning was,—“The next thing” [,] “I shall mention, not for its own sake, “but as a specimen,” &c.; or, putting the words in their natural order, “I shall “mention the next thing, not for its own “sake, but as a specimen,” &c. Your hobby of leaving out commas carries you too far; your readers cannot follow you: and if you are going to set aside the rules of punctuation as well as those of grammar, you must give us something better than this to convince us of the advantage to be gained by adopting such a course.

Among other curious matters to be found in your essays, is the somewhat startling information that the expressions “*I ain't certain*”, “*I ain't going*”, are not unfrequently used by “educated persons”! I suppose you mean, educated at college, where the study of English is altogether ignored; but of that, more by-and-by. In the meantime I pass on to the next sentence in your essay. Having told us

that the above expressions are not unfrequently used by “*educated persons*”; you go on to say, “The main objection to “*them* is, that *they* are proscribed by usage; “but exception may also be taken to *them* “on *their own account*”. So I should think, if they *will* use such expressions as “I ain’t certain”, “I ain’t going”.

“Treated”, and “treated of”. I see you still say “*treated*”, rather than “*treated of*”; e.g. “a matter treated “in my former paper”. On a previous occasion I spoke of this error; but I suppose, as you still express yourself in the same way, you consider the terms synonymous; but they certainly are not. *To treat* is one thing; *to treat of* is another; and it is the latter expression that would convey your meaning. The following sentence will exhibit the difference between the two terms. “A matter “*treated of* in my former paper was *treated* “by you with indifference.”

Ellipsis. One of the defects noticeable in your essays, is that of making your expressions too elliptical. Brevity is undoubtedly an excellent quality in writing; but brevity

should always be subordinate to perspicuity. This has not been attended to in the following sentence, which, singularly enough, happens to be upon the very subject of ellipsis itself. You say, "Some "languages are more elliptical than others; "that is, the habits of thought of some "nations will bear the omission of certain "members of a sentence better than the "habits of thought of other nations" [will]. Do you not perceive that but for the little word "will", which I have added to your sentence, the statement would be, that "the habits of thought of some "nations will bear the omission of certain "members of a sentence better than [they "will bear] the habits of thought of other "nations"?—a truth which no one will be found to deny; but, at the same time, a truth which you did not mean to affirm.

The consequence of too free an indulgence in the elliptical form of expression, would probably be that [in the language of every-day life, at any rate,] all connective words would gradually dis-

"Quack,
quack?"
"Bow,
wow!"

appear from use; and we should, perhaps, ultimately find ourselves, for brevity's sake, adopting the style exemplified in the anecdote given by Farrar, and which runs thus.—“An Englishman, in China, “seeing a dish placed before him, about “which he felt suspicious, and wishing “to know whether it was duck, said “with an interrogative accent, ‘*Quack*, “‘*quack?*’ He received the clear and “straightforward answer, ‘*Bow, wow!*’ “This, no doubt was as good as the “most eloquent conversation on the same “subject between an Englishman and a “French waiter; but I doubt whether it “deserves the name of language.”*

Expletives:—“*at all*”. Among the peculiarities of style observable in your essays is your evident fondness for feeble expletives which add nothing to the meaning of the sentences to which they are attached. You say, for instance,

“I did not allude to the letter *at all*”.

* Farrar's ‘*Origin of Language*,’ p. 74, as quoted in Max Müller's ‘*Lectures*,’ p. 346.

“Twice one not being plural *at all*”.

“Some found fault with me for dealing
“*at all* with the matter”.

“Is it really part of the verb ‘have’,
“*at all?*”

“If we use the past tense *at all*”.

“Without any pains *at all*”.

“The use of the plural verb *at all* is
“unusual”.

I should much like to know the origin
of the phrase, and what difference in the
meaning of any of the above sentences
there would be if the words were struck
out.

Irishisms also should be avoided; for *Irishisms*:
“*the like o' them*” are anything but *“and the like”*.
pleasing in essays on the Queen's *Eng-*
lish.

You say, “Wrong understanding of
“obsolete phrases *and the like*”.

“*Patrōbas, Aristobūlus and the like*”.
“Making out that Andromache was An-
“*drew Mackay and the like*”.

“Such expressions as ‘It is me’, ‘I
“*knew it to be him, and the like*”.

“We continually hear and read ‘This

“‘much I know’, ‘Of that much I am
“‘certain’, *and the like*”.

“To take it in good part, to take a
“man for his brother, *and the like*”.

“‘Plain’, ‘soft’, ‘sweet’, ‘right’,
“‘wrong’, *and the like*”.

“I mean in my youth, or when I was
“in Cheshire, *or the like*”.

What! Not yet over that “*pons asino-
rum*” of juvenile writers, the “*con-
struction louche*”? You were there
when I wrote to you my first letter; and
you are there still? This ought not to
be; for, the effect of this error is so
ridiculous, and the error itself may be
so easily avoided. You say, “Though
“some of the European rulers may be
“females, *when spoken of altogether*, they
“may be correctly classified under the
“denomination ‘kings?’” In this sen-
tence, the clause which I have put in
italics has, what our Gallic neighbours
designate, “a squinting construction”, it
looks two ways at once; that is, it may
be construed as relating to the words
which precede, or to those which follow.

Your former error of this sort was in the *omission* of a comma; this time you have erred by the *insertion* of a comma, and in each case a like result is produced. Had there been no comma after the word "altogether", the ambiguity would have been avoided, because the words in italics would then have formed part of the last clause of the sentence: but as the italicised clause is isolated by commas, the sentence is as perfect a specimen of this error as ever could have been given. Absurd as would be the sentence, its construction is such, that we may understand you to say, "Some of the European rulers "may be females when spoken of altogether"; or we may understand you to say, "when spoken of altogether, they "may be correctly classified under the "denomination 'kings'"; but, even in this last clause, it is evident that you say one thing and mean another. The context shows that what you meant, was, "they may *correctly be* classified", not "they may *be correctly* classified". Slight as is the apparent difference here, the real

The difference between "may be correctly classified", and "may correctly be classified".

difference is very great. If I say, "they "may *be correctly* classified", my words mean that the classification may be made in a correct manner; but if I say, "they "may *correctly be* classified", the meaning is, that it is correct to classify them. In the first example, the adverb qualifies the past participle "classified"; in the second, it qualifies the passive verb to "be clas- "sified"; or, in other words, the adverb in the former instance describes the thing as being properly done; and, in the latter instance, as being a thing proper to do.

The Dean
calls Her
Majesty a
female!

One word more before we finish with this strange sentence of yours. On page 65 I had to ask you why, when speaking of a man, you used the slang word "*individual*". I have here, to ask you a question which is still graver.—Why, when speaking of women, do you apply to them the most debasing of all slang expressions? You speak of the highest person in the land, and that person a lady, and your description of her is one that is equally applicable to a dog!—Her Majesty is—*a female!* I am sure that all who

desire your welfare will join me in hoping that Her Majesty will not see your book. It is but too evident that in condemning these slang phrases, as you do in your '*Queen's English*', page 246, you are echoing the sentiments of *some other writer*, rather than expressing your own abhorrence of slang. I shall be glad if you are able to inform me that I am mistaken in this particular; and that you have not been *quoting*, but have been giving us original matter.

Reverting to the error occasioned by a comma in the former part of your sentence, I may give, as another example of the importance of correct punctuation, an extract from a letter in '*The Times*' of June 19th, 1863; there, simply by the placing of the smallest point, a comma, before, instead of after, one of the smallest words in the language, the word "on", the whole meaning of the sentence is entirely altered, and it is made to express something so horrible that the reader shudders at the mere suggestion of it.

The importance of correct punctuation.

The letter is on American affairs, and

the writer says, "The loss of life will hardly fall short of a quarter of a million; " and how many more were better with "the dead than doomed to crawl, on the mutilated victims of this great national "crime"! He meant to say—"than doomed to crawl on, the mutilated victims of this "great national crime."

"In a fix". But I must hasten to the conclusion of my letter. You say, "The derivation of "the word, as well as the usage of the "great majority of English writers, *fix* "the spelling the other way", *i.e.* *This* (as well as that) *fix it!* Excuse me, but I must ask you why you write thus, even though by putting the question, I put you "*in a fix*" to answer it.

The *final*
"u" in
"tenour" and the *final*
"s" in
"months". You speak of "the *final 'u'* in tenour", and "the *final 's'* in months". You might just as reasonably speak of the *final "A"* in the alphabet.

These errors are so gross that I cannot forbear reproving you in your own words. "Surely it is an evil for a people to be daily accustomed to read English expressed thus obscurely and ungrammatically: it tends

“to confuse thought, and to deprive language of its proper force, and by this means to degrade us as a nation in the rank of thinkers and speakers.”

In your second essay you are loud in praise of variety in composition ; and variety enough you undoubtedly have given us ; but, unfortunately, the *variety* is not of that description which, in our school days, writing-masters made us describe in our copy-books as “*charming*”. We have found, in your Essays on the Queen's English, errors in the use of pronouns ; errors in the use of nouns, both substantive and adjective ; errors in the use of verbs and of adverbs ; and errors in the use of prepositions. There are errors in composition, and errors in punctuation ; errors of ellipsis, and errors of redundancy ; specimens of feeble expletives, and specimens of circumlocution ; specimens of ambiguity, and specimens of squinting constructions ; specimens of slang, and specimens of misquotation of an opponent's words ; and, worst of all, a specimen of a misquotation of Scripture. Add to this the following specimens of

Variety not
always
“charming”.

tautology and tautophony, and the list will, I think, be tolerably complete.

Tautology
and tautoph-
ony.

As you have introduced into your essays the short preface to your Poems, that preface becomes fairly amenable to criticism, and I remark that in it you say, “This will *account* for a few specimens of “Transatlantic orthography *for* which the “author must not be *accounted* responsible”.

The following is from your third essay, —“An officer whose duty it is to keep a “counter-roll, or check on the *accounts* of “others. It seems also clear, from this “*account* of the word, that it ought not,” &c.

Then I read, “One word *on* ‘this’ “and ‘that’, as we pass *onward*”.

“At last we *abated* the nuisance by “enacting, that in future the *debatable* “first syllable should be dropped”.

“Thought and speech have ever been “freer in England than in *other* countries. “From these and *other* circumstances, “the English language has become more “idiomatic than most *others*”.

“The sentences which I have quoted are “but a few *out* of the countless *instances* “*in* our best writers, and *in* their most

“chaste and beautiful passages, *in* which
“this usage occurs. On examining *into*
“it, we find”—&c. &c.

Enough! It was my intention to say a few words of caution to students of the Queen's English, on your advice to them to disregard the rules of grammarians and be guided by custom and common sense; but, on second thoughts, I am sure that any further remarks must be unnecessary; for if your plan cannot do more for its teacher, there need be no fear that it will be followed by any sagacious pupil.

I had fully intended to speak also on the necessity of a more thorough study of English at our Universities; but any remarks on that, will likewise be considered needless; for, your own English is, itself, a volume on the subject.*

* “To such as can hardly believe, that in our “Public Schools, Colleges, and Universities, there “is not the slightest special training in English, ‘even for those who are about to enter Holy Orders, “I can only say that, however surprising it may “seem, it is the simple fact.” “Some have said, “that no English teaching is needed in our Universities, for men are sufficiently instructed in the

Ah ! Doctor Alford, we find you guilty

“language when they ‘come up’. I meet this by a “simple denial, adding that most men are not sufficiently instructed *even when they ‘go down’*. I “appeal to College Tutors, Examiners, Bishops’ “Chaplains, and to the Public, whether I exaggerate “or not in making this assertion.”—‘*A Plea for the Study of the English Language*’, by Alexander J. D. D’Orsey, B.D., English Lecturer at the Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, pp. 2, 37.

Read also the ‘*Report of Her Majesty’s Commissioners appointed to inquire into the management of certain Colleges and Schools*’. (Presented to Parliament by command of Her Majesty, March, 1864.) The following is from the Report of the examination of the head master of Eton, “the greatest “and most influential of our Public Schools.”

Question, No. 3530, [Lord Clarendon]. “What “measures do you now take to keep up English at “Eton ?”—“There are none at present, except “through the ancient languages.”

Question, No. 3531. “You can scarcely learn “English reading and writing through Thucydides ?”, “—No.”

Question, No. 3532, [Sir S. Northcote]. “You “do not think it is satisfactory ?”—“No ; the “English teaching is not satisfactory, and as a “question of precedence, I would have English “taught before French.”

Question, No. 3533. “You do not consider that “English is taught at present ?”—“No.”

of injuring by your example a glorious

“In Greek and Latin, no doubt, the clergy have advanced as fast as their age, or faster. University men now write Greek Iambics, as every one knows, rather better than Sophocles, and would no more think of violating the Pause than of violating an oath. A good proportion of them are also perfectly at home in the calculation of perihelions, nodes, mean motions, and other interesting things of the same kind, which it is unnecessary to specify more particularly. So far the clergy are at least on a level with their age. But this is all that can be said. *When we come to their mother-tongue a different story is to be told.* Their English—the English of their sermons—is nearly where it was a hundred years ago. The author of ‘Twenty years in the Church’ makes the driver of a coach remark to his hero, that *young gentlemen from college preparing to take orders appear to have learned everything except their own language.* And so they have. Exceptions, of course, there are, many and bright; but in the main the charge is true. The things in which, compared with former ages, they excel so conspicuously, are *the very things which have least concern with their special calling.* The course of their progress has reversed the course of charity;—it began abroad, and has never yet reached home.”—‘*Cornhill Magazine,*’ May,

1861.

inheritance, such as has been bequeathed to no other nation under heaven.*

I can believe that the English language is destined to be that in which shall arise, as in one universal temple, the utterance of the worship of all hearts. Broad and deep have the foundations been laid; and so vast is the area which they cover, that it is co-extensive with the great globe itself. For centuries past, proud intellectual giants have laboured at this mighty fabric; and still it rises, and will rise for generations to come: and on its massive stones will be inscribed the names of the profoundest thinkers, and on its springing arches the records of the most daring flights of the master minds of genius, whose fame was made enduring by their love of the Beautiful and their adoration of the All Good. In this temple the Anglo-Saxon

* Grimm says, "The English tongue possesses a veritable power of expression, such as, perhaps, never stood at the command of any other language of man."—*'Ursprung der Sprache,'* p. 52.

"Take it all in all, it is the grandest and the richest of modern tongues."—*'Edinburgh Review,'* July, 1864, p. 176.

mosaic of the sacred words of truth will be the solid and enduring pavement; the dreams of poets will fill the rich tracery of its windows with the many-coloured hues of thought; and the works of lofty philosophic minds will be the stately columns supporting its fretted roof, whence shall hang, sculptured, the rich fruits of the tree of knowledge, precious as "apples "of gold"—"the words of the wise".

I am, Rev. Sir,

Yours most respectfully,

G. WASHINGTON MOON.

London, May, 1864.

“Curam verborum rerum volo esse solici-
“tudinem.”—QUINTILIAN.

EXAMPLE *versus* PRECEPT.

THE Dean said [‘*Good Words*’, 1863, page 437] “*The less you turn your words right or “left to observe Mr. Moon’s rules, the better”*”. It will provoke a smile on the face of the reader to be told that although the Dean gives this advice to *others*, he himself has, in the second edition of his work, altered and struck out, altogether not fewer than eight-and-twenty passages which Mr. Moon had condemned as faulty. For the entertainment of the curious in such matters, the original passages as condemned in ‘*The Dean’s English*’, and the same passages as altered in the second edition of ‘*The Queen’s English*’, are subjoined in parallel columns. It is scarcely requisite to say that “*altered*” does not necessarily imply “*corrected*”.

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I.

So far from its being "so well known a fact" that we reserve the singular pronouns "thou" and "thee" *entirely* for our addresses in prayer to Him who is the highest Personality, it is not a fact.—p. 7.

Struck out.

II.

You say, "The great enemies to understanding anything printed in our language are the commas. And these are inserted by the compositors without the slightest compunction." I should say that the great enemy to our understanding this sentence of yours is the want of commas.—p. 11.

A comma inserted between "compositors" and "without the slightest compunction".
—p. 99.

III.

You speak of persons "mending their *ways*"; and in the very next paragraph you speak of "the Queen's *highway*", and of "*by-roads*" and "*private roads*".—p. 12.

Struck out.

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IV.

Immediately after your speaking of "things without life", you startle us with that strange sentence of yours,—"I will "introduce the body of my "essay". *Introduce the body!*"—p. 13.

Struck out.

V.

"But to be more serious", as you say in your essay, and then immediately give us a sentence in which the grave and the grotesque are most incongruously blended. I read, "A "man does not lose his mother "now in the papers." I have read figurative language which spoke of lawyers being lost in their papers, and students being buried in their books; but I never read of a man losing his mother in the papers.—p. 13.

In the papers, a man does not now lose his mother.—p. 251

VI.

In the sentence, "I only bring forward some things", the adverb "only" is similarly

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misplaced: for, in the following sentence, the words "Plenty "more might be said", show that the "only" refers to the "some things", and not to the fact of your bringing them forward. The sentence should therefore have been, "I bring "forward some things only".

—p. 15.

Struck out.

VII.

In your essay, you say, "I "remember, when the French "band of the 'Guides' were "in this country, reading in "the 'Illustrated News'". Were the Frenchmen, when in this country, reading in 'The Illustrated News'? or did you mean that you remembered reading in 'The Illustrated News'?—p. 19.

I remember, when the French band of the 'Guides' were in this country, to have read in the 'Illustrated News'. —p. 249.

VIII.

You also say, "It is not so "much of the great highway "itself of the Queen's English "that I would now speak, as of "some of the laws of the road;

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“the by-rules, to compare small things with great, which hang up framed at the various stations”. What are the great things which hang up framed at the various stations?—p. 20.

The by-rules, so to speak, which hang up framed at the various stations.—p. 5.

IX.

So, too, in that sentence which introduces the body of your essay, you speak of “the *“reluctance which we in modern Europe have to giving any prominence to the personality of single individuals in social intercourse”*; and yet it was evidently not of single individuals in social intercourse that you intended to speak, but of giving, in social intercourse, any prominence to the personality of single individuals.—p. 20.

Struck out.

X.

Continuing my review of your essay, I notice that it is said of a traveller on the Queen's highway, “*He bowls along it with ease in a vehicle, which a few centuries ago would have been*

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*“broken to pieces in a deep rut,
“or come to grief in a bottom-
“less swamp”.* There being it with ease in a
here no words immediately be- vehicle, which a
fore “come”, to indicate in few centuries ago
what tense that verb is, I have would have been
to turn back to find the tense, broken to pieces
and am obliged to read the in a deep rut, or
sentence thus, “*would have would have come*
“*been broken to pieces in a to grief in a bot-*
“*deep rut, or [would have been] tomless swamp.—*
“*come to grief in a bottomless p. 2.*
“*swamp”*.—p. 28.

XI.

Further on, I find you speak-
ing of “*that fertile source of*
“*mistakes among our clergy,*
“*the mispronunciation of Scrip-*
“*ture proper names*”. It is
not the “mispronunciation of
“Scripture proper names”
which is the *source* of mistakes ;
the mispronunciation of Scrip-
ture proper names constitutes
the mistakes themselves of
which you are speaking ; and
a thing cannot at the same time
be a source, and that which
flows from it.—p. 29.

Struck out.

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XII.

In some sentences your pronouns have actually no nouns to which they apply. For example, you say, "*a journal published by these people*". By what people? Where is the noun to which this relative pronoun refers? In your head it may have been, but it certainly is not in your essay.—p. 35.

A journal published by the advocates of this change.—p. 14.

XIII.

Only eight-and-twenty nouns intervening between the pronoun "it" and the noun "habit" to which it refers!—p. 37.

The paragraph has been entirely reconstructed. — p. 42.

XIV.

You make the assertion that the possessive pronoun "its" never occurs in the "*English version of the Bible*". Look at Leviticus xxv, 5, "That which groweth of its own accord".—p. 37.

In the English version of the Bible, *made in its present authorized form in the reign of James I.*—p. 7.

XV.

There are, in your second essay, some very strange speci-

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mens of Queen's English. You say, "*The one rule, of all others, which he cites*". Now as, in defence of your particular views, you appeal so largely to common sense, let me ask, in the name of that common sense, how can *one* thing be *another* thing? How can *one* rule be *of* all *other* rules the one which I cite?—p. 54.

The one rule which is supposed by the ordinary rhetoricians to regulate the arrangement of words in sentences, is, &c.—p. 123.

XVI.

You say, "*The verb is not a strict neuter-substantive*". Your sentence is an explanation of your use of the word "*oddly*", in the phrase, "*would read rather oddly*"; and *oddly enough* you have explained it: "*would read*" is the conditional form of the *verb*; and how can that ever be either *a neuter-substantive*, or a *substantive* of any other kind?—p. 56.

In a previous paragraph we now read of a verb, "*of that class called neuter-substantive, i.e., neuter, and akin in construction to the verb-substantive to be*".—p. 206.

XVII.

Again, you say, "*The whole number is divided into two classes: the first class, and the last class. To the former of*

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“these belong three: to the latter, one”. That is, “To the former of these *belong* three: “to the latter [*belong*] one”; *one belong!* When, in the latter part of a compound sentence, we change the nominative, we must likewise change the verb, that it may agree with its nominative.—p. 57.

To the former of these belong three: to the latter *belongs* one.—p. 146.

XVIII.

The error is repeated in the very next sentence. You say, “*There are three that are ranged under the description ‘first’: and one that is ranged under the description ‘last’*”. That is, “*There are three that are ranged under the description ‘first’; and [there are] one that is ranged under the description ‘last’*”. *There are one!*—p. 57.

There are three that are ranged under the description ‘first’; and *there is* one that is ranged under the description ‘last’.—p. 146.

XIX.

It appears to me that, before you have finished a sentence, you have forgotten how you

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began it. Here is another instance. You say, “*We call a “cup-board” a “cubbard”, a “half-penny” a “haepenny”, and so of many other compound words*”. Had you begun your sentence thus, “*We speak of a “cup-board” as a “beard” a “cubbard”, of a “half-penny” as “bard”, a “half-a “haepenny”, it would have “penny” a “haepenny”, it would have been correct to say, “and so of many other compound words*”; because the clause would mean, “*and so [we speak] of many pound words*”—p. 53.

having begun the sentence with “*We call*,” it is sheer nonsense to finish it with “*and so of*”; for it is saying, “*and so [we call] of many other compound words*”—p. 58.

We call a ‘cup-board’ a ‘cubbard’, of a ‘half-penny’ as ‘bard’, a ‘half-a ‘haepenny’, it would have ‘penny’ a ‘haepenny’, and we similarly contract many other compound words.—p. 53.

XX.

You speak of rules laid down “by the *dictionaries*” and the “*professors of rhetoric*”; thus substituting, in one case, the works for the men; and, in the other case, speaking of the men themselves. Why not either

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speak of the “*compilers of dictionaries*” and the “*professors of rhetoric*”; or else speak of the “*dictionaries*” and the “*treatises on rhetoric*”?—p. 59.

Struck out.

XXI.

The construction of some of your sentences is very objectionable: you say, “*I have noticed the word ‘party’ used for an individual, occurring in Shakspeare*”; instead of, for a man, occurs “*I have noticed, in Shakspeare, the word ‘party’ used for an individual.*” But how is it that you call a man “*an individual*”?—p. 65.

The word ‘party’, in Shakspeare.—p. 246.

XXII.

You say, “While treating of the pronunciation of those who minister in public, two other words occur to me which are very commonly mangled by our clergy. One of these is ‘covetous’, and its substantive ‘covetousness’. I hope some who read these

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"lines will be induced to leave off pronouncing *them* 'cove-
tious' and 'covetousness'. 'I can assure *them*, that when
'they do thus call *them*, one, 'at least, of *their* hearers has
'his appreciation of *their* teach-
ing disturbed'. I fancy that many a one who reads these lines will have *his* appreciation of *your* teaching disturbed.— p. 69.

I hope that some
of *my* clerical readers will be induced to leave off pronouncing them 'co-
'vetious' and 'co-
vetousness'. I can assure them, that when they do thus call *the words*,
&c.—p. 63.

XXIII.

Speaking of the word "its", you say, "Its apparent occurrence in the place quoted is simply due to the King's printers, who have modernised the passage". Apparent occurrence! It is a real occurrence. Are we not to believe our eyes?—p. 80.

Struck out.

XXIV.

As for the "King's printers", it was not they who introduced the word "its" into the English Bible. The first English Bible in which the word is

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found, is one that was printed at a time when there was *no King on the English throne*, consequently when there were *the printers*.—p. 7. An alteration by no “King’s printers”: it was printed during the Commonwealth.—p. 80.

XXV.

The following is, if intentional, which I cannot believe, the boldest instance of misquotation of Scripture, to suit a special purpose, that I ever met with. You say, “In Numbers xii, 2, we read, ‘Hath the Lord *only spoken* by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us?’ According to some of my correspondents, and to Mr. Moon’s pamphlet, this ought to be ‘Hath the Lord *spoken only* by Moses?’ I venture to prefer very much the words as they stand”. Now, strange as it may appear after your assertion, it is nevertheless a fact that the words, as you quote them, do *not* occur in the authorized version, known

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as King James's Bible of 1611, or in our present version, or in any other version I have ever seen; and the words, in the order in which you say I and your other correspondents would have written them, do occur in every copy of the Scriptures to which I have referred! So you very much prefer the words as they stand, do you? Ha! Ha! Ha! *So do I.* When next you write about the adverb "*only*", be sure you quote *only* the right passage of Scripture to suit your purpose.—p. 82.

The Dean found another passage, which suited his purpose, and quoted it.—p. 143.

XXVI.

"Though some of the European rulers may be females, "*when spoken of altogether*, "they may be correctly classified under the denomination kings'". In this sentence, the clause which I have put in italics has, what our Gallic neighbours designate, "a squinting construction", it looks

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two ways at once; that is, it may be construed as relating to the European rulers which precede, or to those which follow. Absurd as males, they would be the sentence, its construction is such, that we may understand you to say, "Some of the European rulers may be females, when spoken of altogether."—p. 112.

Though some of the words which precede, or to those which follow. Absurd as males, they would be the sentence, its construction is such, that we may understand you to say, "Some of the European rulers may be females, when spoken of altogether."—p. 112.

be correctly classified, when spoken of altogether, under the denomination "kings".—p. 97.

XXVII.

You say, "*The derivation of the word, as well as the usage of the great majority of English writers, fix the spelling of the other way*". i. e. *This [as well as that] fix it!* Excuse me, but I must ask you why you write thus, even though by putting the question, I put you "in a fix" to answer it.—p. 116.

The derivation of the word, as well as the usage of the great majority of English writers, fixes the other way.—p. 33.

XXVIII.

"At last we abated the nuisance by enacting, that in future the debatable syllable should be dropped".—p. 118.

At last we abated the nuisance by enacting that in future the first syllable should be dropped.—p. 56.

Of course the Dean was wise to alter his sentences;—to turn his words right and left in observance of certain rules. The joke is, that he should do so after having advised his readers to do nothing of the sort. We congratulate the Dean that, concerning the alteration of sentences, we are able in his case to reverse the old adage and say, “Do as the Dean *does*, and not as the “Dean *says*.”

APPENDIX.

A CRITICISM FROM THE ENGLISH CHURCHMAN.

The Queen's English. Stray Notes on Speaking and Spelling. By Henry Alford, D.D., Dean of Canterbury. (London : Strahan and Co.; Deighton, Bell, and Co., pp. 257.)

WE scarcely know whether to look upon the labours of Dean Alford in the cause of our language as a loss or as a gain. In many ways his remarks on the Queen's English must have been attended with good results. The wide circulation which they obtained, when first published in '*Good Words*', has caused a vast number of persons to pay far more attention to this much-neglected subject than they had ever done before. Many have been brought for the first time to bestow a serious attention on their mother-tongue, and to see that the consideration of the words in which their thoughts are clothed is a matter of no small

moment, and furnishes a true test of a nation's character and progress. In these papers they have been warned against the use of mean and slipshod English, against an affected and unnatural style, and, in fact, against most of the faults which mar the language of the present day, and which may be found so abundant in the columns of the periodical press, and in the conversation of half-educated persons. On the other hand, the Dean has set an evil example by rendering the standard of right and wrong in language more wavering and uncertain than ever: custom, according to him, is the only court of appeal, and the laws of grammar are to be left to pedants and pedagogues. If this is to be the case, it seems hopeless to bring many of those, who habitually break the laws of language, to a sense of their shortcomings. They have been brought up from their birth amongst persons who commit the same faults, and they are unable to see the nature of these faults. If referred to the laws of grammar, they appeal to the authority of Dean Alford to show that it is pedantic to be guided by grammarians; if referred to the custom of educated persons, they maintain their own experience against that of their reprovers, and declare that their own usage is the customary one, and that the one recommended to them is contrary to custom.

Amongst the paradoxical statements of Dean Alford, we have selected some of the most prominent for comment. At the time of the

first appearance of these papers, a great, and, in our opinion, not unreasonable, outcry was made against the sanctioning of the phrase, "It is me". The Dean brings forth Dr. Latham in support of his opinion, and refers us to the following extract from that gentleman's '*History of the English Language*' :—

"We may.....call the word *me* a secondary nominative, inasmuch as such phrases as *It is me*—*It is I*, are common. To call such expressions incorrect English, is to assume the point. No one says that *c'est moi* is bad French, and *c'est je* is good. The fact is, that with us the whole question is a question of degree. Has or has not the custom been sufficiently prevalent to have transferred the forms *me*, *ye*, and *you*, from one case to another? Or perhaps we may say, is there any real custom at all in favour of *I*, except so far as the grammarians have made one? It is clear that the French analogy is against it. It is also clear that the personal pronoun as a predicate may be in a different analogy from the personal pronoun as a subject".

We have great respect for Dr. Latham's learning, but in a matter like the present we cannot submit to his authority. Modern writers on language, when treating of well-known words and phrases, are often apt to seek opportunities for displaying their own ingenuity in giving unusual explanations of them, and Dr. Latham is by no means free from a partiality for crotchets of this kind. There is no analogy between English and French in this matter. It is a peculiarity of the French language that each pair of words which repre-

sents the different cases of the singular personal pronouns in other languages is in French represented by three words instead of two. I, me—*je, me, moi*; thou, thee—*tu, te, toi*; he, him—*il, le, lui*. *Moi, toi, lui*, are used as nominative cases when coming after the verb. If Dr. Latham's reasoning is right, that because we have in French *c'est moi*, not *c'est je* therefore, it is right to say in English, "it is "me", not "it is I": then it follows that because we say *c'est toi*, not *c'est tu, c'est lui*, not *c'est il*, it is right to say "it is thee", "it "is him", or "her". It seems to us as bad grammar to say, "it is me", in English, as *c'est me* in French. He further says that "when "constructions are predicative, a change is "what we must expect rather than be surprised "at". We see this change of construction in French when the pronouns are predicative, because each pronoun has three distinct forms, but as English, together with the rest of the European languages (with which we are acquainted), has only two forms of personal pronouns, therefore the change cannot take place when the construction is predicative. Another reason given by Dr. Latham for the usage is, that *me* is not the proper, but only the adopted accusative of *I*, 'being in fact a "distinct and independent form of the personal "pronoun". We do not see why, because *me* is the adopted accusative of *I*, it should become "a secondary nominative". All the European languages of which we have any knowledge

have an adopted accusative for the first person singular, but we do not find in them any traces of its being used as a secondary nominative (though it may appear so in French); why, then, are we to grant this license to English, merely to gratify a careless habit which may easily be corrected? We now come to consider Dean Alford's own remarks on these three little words. He seems to think that the reason for the substitution of *me* for *I* is a shrinking from obtruding our own personality, and endeavours to confirm his view by referring to an instance of the contrary practice in the well-known passage:—

“He said unto them, ‘It is I, be not afraid’. This is a capital instance; for it us shows at once why the nominative should be sometimes used. The Majesty of the Speaker here, and his purpose of re-assuring the disciples by the assertion that it was none other than Himself, at once point out to us the case in which it would be proper for the nominative, and not the accusative to be used”.

We will venture to say that the sole reason which the translators of the Bible had for writing “it is I” in this verse, was because they considered it the proper grammatical phrase, and “it is me” ungrammatical. How would Dean Alford account for the two following verses, Matt. xxvi. 22, 25, “And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?” “Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and

“said, Master, is it I?” Certainly, according to the Dean’s reasoning, we ought in each case to have, “Is it me?” but there is no trace of such a usage throughout the Bible.

Dean Alford asks the question, “What are we “to think of the question whether *than* does or “does not govern an accusative case?”—

“The fact is, that there are two ways of constructing a clause with a comparative and ‘*than*’. You may say either ‘*than I*’ or ‘*than me*’. If you say the former, you use what is called an elliptical expression, *i.e.* an expression in which something is left out—and that something is the verb ‘*am*’. ‘He is wiser than I’, being filled out, would be, ‘He is wiser than I *am*’. ‘He is wiser than me’ is the direct and complete construction”.

We agree that there are two ways of constructing the clause—a right way and a wrong way. “He is wiser than I” is right. “He is “wiser than me” is wrong. There is no occasion to make use of an ellipse at all. *Than* is a conjunction, and cannot, therefore, govern an accusative case, as it is a fundamental rule of all languages that conjunctions should couple like cases. We cannot see in what way “He is “wiser than me” can be more complete than “He is wiser than I”. Again, we find the rule laid down by the Dean, that, when solemnity is required, the construction in the nominative is used; and he quotes John xiv. 28, “My father “is greater than I”. This would be of some weight if he could bring a single instance in which *than* of itself governed an accusative in

a case where solemnity was not required, but we do not think that he will find one in the Bible. In Gen. xxxix. 8, Joseph says to Potiphar's wife, "Behold, my master knoweth "not what is with me in the house, and he hath "committed all that he hath to my hand ; there "is none greater in the house than I ; neither "hath he kept back", &c. We cannot suppose that the translators wished to represent Joseph as attaching any solemnity to the words "there "is none greater than I", which are introduced in the middle of a long sentence. The reason for their occurring thus is because the translators knew that the phrase, "there is none greater "than me", is entirely ungrammatical. Dean Alford considers that the invariable use of "than whom", instead of "than who", is a proof that *than* governs an accusative case, as in '*Paradise Lost*', ii. 299:—

"Which when Beelzebub perceived, than whom,
"Satan except, none higher sat".

We quite agree that, to say "than who", would be intolerable in this instance to most ears, but we do not consider that this single anomalous expression is enough to warrant us in saying that "than" takes the accusative. The expressions "than whom", "than which", are very sparingly used in writing, and never in ordinary conversation. Probably the first person who wrote "than whom", did so in ignorance of the rules of grammar, and the error was so perpetuated by his copyists that it

became a settled usage. Another explanation of it is, that the "m" was added for the sake of euphony. However that may be, we cannot allow that one anomaly of this kind can justify us in going counter to the grammar and usage of all languages.

Of course, when *than* couples a pronoun to a word in the accusative case, the pronoun must also be put in the accusative; we must say "He "likes you better than me", and not "he likes "you better than I"; the latter phrase is inadmissible.* In our opinion this shows completely that *than* is nothing more than a conjunction, and it is an unheard-of thing in any language that a conjunction can govern an accusative. *As* is a word of precisely the same character as *than*: would Dean Alford defend the vulgarisms, "I am as tall as him", "He is as tall as me"?

A correspondent has kindly sent us a well-known example of the latter usage from one of our standard poets:—

"The nations not so blest as *thee*
 "Must in their turn to tyrants fall,
 "Whilst thou shalt flourish, great and free,
 "The dread and envy of them all."
 THOMSON'S 'Rule Britannia.'

In our opinion the first line of this stanza is utterly indefensible.

The Dean upholds the use of the verb "to

* "He likes you better *than me*" is, He likes you better than [he likes] me; and, "He likes you better *than I*" is, He likes you better *than I* [like you]. The meaning of each phrase is widely different.—G. W. M.

“leave”, in a neuter, or, as he bids us term it, an absolute sense. He defends the sentence “I shall not *leave* before December 1” on the ground that the verb is still active, but the object is suppressed. We deny that to “leave” is here used in an active sense; it is synonymous with “to go away”, “depart”, &c., which are neuter verbs. The Dean brings forward the instances of the verbs “to read” and “to write”, as though they were analogous cases, because they may be used at will either transitively or intransitively. These verbs, however, themselves express an occupation, just as much as to run, to sit, or to stand. If we wish to know how any one is spending his time, it is a sufficient answer to say “He is reading”; if we are aware of that fact, and wish to know what is the object of his study, then we must use the verb transitively, and say, “He is reading ‘*The Queen’s English*’”, or any other book. “To read” has become to all of us a complete notion; “to leave” is not so; and, as we said before, must be used as an equivalent for to depart, or go away, in the phrase quoted. This is an unnecessary extension of its signification, and as all such extensions give rise to more or less ambiguity, they should be avoided. The use of a verb in an intransitive as well as a transitive sense must always be a matter depending entirely on authority. Such a use of “to leave” was ignored formerly, and has arisen only within comparatively few years from the carelessness of slipshod speakers and writers.

In the present day it is eschewed by good writers of English ; by others it is used invariably, but quite unnecessarily, in a neuter sense.

In Dr. Alford's objections to the restrictions placed by grammarians on the words *first* and *last*, *former* and *latter*, he makes the following remarks :—

“ ‘ *First* ’ is unavoidably used of that one in a series with which we begin, whatever be the number which follow ; whether many or few. Why should not *last* be used of that one in a series with which we end, whatever be the number which preceded, whether many or few ? ”

We should have thought that the answer was quite evident. *First* has two meanings ; it stands for the superlative of the comparative *former*, and for the ordinal corresponding to the cardinal number *one*. *Last* is used only as the superlative of *latter* ; it cannot, therefore, be ever used in numerical statements. In speaking of a book in two volumes, which are numbered 1 and 2, we refer to the 1st or 2nd volume ; but 1st is not here the same as *first*, the superlative of *former*. This is easily shown in the case of most of our large public schools, where the 6th form is the first, and the 1st form the last in the school. If we had such a word as *oneth* to stand as the ordinal of *one*, we should say that the 6th form is the first, and the oneth the last ; as it is, we are obliged to make *first* do duty in each case.

We do not agree theoretically with the Dean's remarks on the aspiration of the “ *h* ” in *humble*,

though practically we think it advisable to follow the growing usage of the day, and sound the “h”. It was formerly almost as common to say *umble* as it was to say *onour* and (*h*)our. In regard to the words “*ospital*”, “*erb*”, and “*umble*”, our author says that all of them are “very offensive, but the last of them by far the “worst, especially when heard from officiating “Clergymen”. We believe that the reason why the Clergy have so commonly adopted the practice of sounding the “h” in *humble*, is because educated persons cannot endure the idea of its being said of them that they drop their “h’s”; directly, therefore, the custom became prevalent of aspirating *humble*, the Clergy at once took it up. It will be the same as soon as it becomes at all usual to sound the “h” in honour, honesty, &c. We deny that “*umble* and *hearty* no man can pronounce without a pain in his throat”; it is just as easy to pronounce as “under heaven”.

In one or two places the Dean becomes hyper-critical; for instance:—

“By-the-by, what are we to think of the phrase which came in during the Crimean war, ‘*The right man in the right place*’? How can the right man ever be in the wrong place? or the wrong man in the right place? We used to illustrate the unfitness of things by saying that the round man had got into the square hole, and the square man into the round hole; that was correct enough; but it was the *putting incongruous things together* that was wrong, not the man, nor the hole”.

It is the custom in all languages, when it is

desired that an idea shall be impressed forcibly on a reader, to repeat the word in some way or other. Thus, in the 2nd chapter of Genesis, the original of "thou shalt surely die" is "dy-ing thou shalt die"; so likewise, in the New Testament, with the Hebraism, "with desire "have I desired". The Greek tragedians abound in such pleonasm, especially in the repetition of an adjective, by qualifying the verb with the adverb formed from the adjective. In the present instance, "the right man in the "place", sounds wretchedly flat in comparison with "the right man in the right place".

There are many other remarks in this work with which we cannot agree, but we have no wish to weary our readers with further criticisms on this somewhat dry subject.—*The English Churchman*, January 28, 1864.

THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH.

A CRITICISM FROM '*The Patriot*.'

DEAN ALFORD has collected into a book his papers contributed to '*Good Words*' and, of course, has subjected them to a fresh and final revision. He tells us, indeed, that "now, in a considerably "altered form, they are presented to the public"; so that we may fairly regard both the canons and the composition of this volume as the deliberate and final setting forth of the

Dean's notions of the proprieties of the English language. No plea of hasty writing, such as unfortunate newspaper writers, or public lecturers, or even magazine contributors, might fitly urge is valid here. The Dean tells us, too—what we are very glad to learn, and what speaks well for the Christian placability of both parties—that the somewhat sharp passage of arms betwixt Mr. Moon and himself has ended in an invitation to dinner and a real friendship. "From antagonism we came to intercourse; " and one result of the controversy I cannot "regret—that it has enabled me to receive Mr. "Moon as a guest, and to regard him henceforth as my friend." Will this deprive the public of the benefit of Mr. Moon's criticisms upon the present volume? We should be sorry to think so; for there really is much to be said about it, and, we fear, much fault to be found with it. Dean Alford has rendered good service to his generation. He was an exemplary working clergyman; and he is, we doubt not, as exemplary a Dean. He is an excellent poet, and his beautiful hymn, "*Lo, the storms of life are breaking*", sung to sweet music, has often soothed our soul. We cannot call him an accomplished Greek scholar; but he has compiled the most useful working Greek Testament of our generation; amenable to a thousand adverse criticisms, but laboriously bringing together almost all that working clergymen need.

But with all this we cannot regard him as an authority on the philosophy of the English

language, or as an example of its more accurate use. It is strange that men should imagine themselves that which they are so far from being, that they are unconscious even of their defects. Only a scholar of the widest philological reading and of the nicest discrimination should have presumed to write a book on the use and abuse of the Queen's English. No doubt Dean Alford thinks that he is such a scholar, and that his composition, if not in his ordinary sermons, yet in this volume, is faultless. We regret to be compelled to think otherwise. His style, where not positively ungrammatical, is loose, and flabby, and awkward ; his sentences are ungainly in construction, and sometimes positively ludicrous in the meaning which they involuntarily convey. We will take a few instances ; and we begin with the third sentence in the book.

"It" (the term "Queen's English") "is one "rather familiar and conventional, than strictly "accurate". As Dean Alford uses it, the adverb "rather" qualifies the terms "familiar" and "conventional". He means it to qualify the term "strictly accurate", and should have said, "It is one familiar and conventional rather than "strictly accurate".

"For language wants all these processes, as "well as roads do", is scarcely so elegant as a critical Dean should have written.

Again : "And it is by processes of this kind "in the course of centuries, that our English "tongue has been ever adapted", &c. ; instead

of "It is by processes of this kind that, in the "course of centuries, our English tongue", &c.

"Carefulness about minute accuracies of in- "flexion and grammar may appear to some very "contemptible". We trust that the Dean is not one of these; but would it not have been better to have written, "may to some appear "very contemptible"?

"The other example is one familiar to you, "of a more solemn character". And what is it to those given to levity? The Dean meant to say, "The other example is of a more solemn "character, and is one familiar to you".

"The first remark that *I have* to make *shall* "be on the trick now *so* universal across the "Atlantic". Here tenses are curiously confused; and the Dean apparently forgets that the term *universal* is absolute, and does not admit of a comparative.

"The late Archdeacon Hare, in an article on "English orthography in the 'Philological Mu- "seum'". We did not know that the English orthography of the 'Philological Museum' was peculiar or needed an article. The Dean means "in an article in the 'Philological Museum' on "English orthography".

"We do not follow rule in spelling the other "words, but custom". An elegant writer would have said, "In spelling the other words we do "not follow rule, but custom".

These specimens occur in the first twelve pages; how many the entire volume would afford, is beyond our calculation. A little farther

on we read:—"As I write these lines, which I "do while waiting in a refreshment-room at "Reading, between a Great Western and a "South-Eastern train". We did not know that the refreshment-room at Reading stood between two trains.

With many of Dean Alford's canons, both of derivation, pronunciation, and even spelling, we have almost equal fault to find; but we forbear. We must say, however, that, notwithstanding Mr. Latham's authority, and at the risk of being reckoned "grammarians of the smaller "sort", we are still unconvinced of the propriety of saying, even colloquially, "It's me", and of the pedantry of saying, "It's I".

We must add, too, that a somewhat unseemly egotism and gossipiness pervade the book—pardonable enough in popular lectures, but surely to be excluded from a philological treatise. The Dean seems to have no plan, but just to say anything that comes first, and to say it anyhow. Perhaps he thinks the chit-chat of a Dean sufficient for all persons of lesser dignity.

Dean Alford, of course, says many just and useful things, and will, we trust, do something to correct some errors and vulgarisms. But it is one thing to read Dean Alford's sentences, and it is another to read Macaulay's.—*'Patriot,'* January 14, 1864.

A Plea for the Queen's English. By Henry Alford, D.D., Dean of Canterbury. 'Good Words', March, 1863.

A CRITICISM BY PERNICKITY PAWKIE, GENT.

[From the 'Glasgow Christian News.']

THE "Southrons" (so we at one time called them) are unlike any other of the nations in regard to the treatment which they bestow upon their language. They call it their "mother-tongue", and yet, if the Dean of Canterbury be a trustworthy witness, their mothers did not speak it; if you check any Southron for mispronouncing a word, he will gravely inform you that he goes by Entick, Sheridan, Knowles, or somebody else. You cannot get the Southrons, as a people, to "go by" any *one* authority for five minutes at a time in the accentuation of their *brother-tongue*; and yet you will find yourself greatly mistaken if you suppose that *you* are getting from any Southron the credit of speaking "the Queen's English," unless you condescend to imitate some foppish speaker of that *licentious* language.

The Dean of Canterbury has written what he calls '*A Plea for the Queen's English*' in '*Good Words*' for March; and I shall be bold enough to show that, in some particulars, the Dean has really written adversely towards the Queen's English.

The Dean has written as follows :—

“In common talk the pronouns ‘*I*’, ‘*he*’, ‘*she*’, are freely used. But when the form of the context throws these pronouns into unusual prominence, we shrink, I suppose, from making so much of ourselves or one another as the use of them in the nominative case would imply. Was there ever one of us who, when asked ‘Who’s there?’ did not first and most naturally reply, ‘It’s me’. And though reproved, and it may be even corrected as a child for the mistake, which of us is there that does not continually fall into it, if it *be* one, again and again?”

Now let us observe what the Dean says in the latter part of the above passage: he questions if the act of placing the word *me* where *I* ought to be is a mistake! Dr. Caird should be most truly grateful to Dean Alford; for the Doctor says—“Believing in that love stronger than “death which for me, and such as *me*, drained “the cup of untold sorrows”. If an English Dean has not something useful to do, let him by all means avoid teaching us *bad* English. The shade of Sir Walter Scott ought to be most truly grateful to Dean Alford; for the Dean is of opinion that the following may *not* really be a mistake:—

“Yet oft in Holy Writ we see
“Even such weak minister as *me*
“May the oppressor bruise”.

Any one who has given the least attention to the subject must have observed that the Dean is pleading for a blunder which is just the *ever-*

lasting one on both sides of the Tweed: and that the Dean's idea of its being the result of a sweet modesty is the veriest nonsense—as if, forsooth the spirit of *egotism* is not as frequently practised under the word *me* as under the word *I*!*

The guide in the matter is very simple: let the *verb* be supplied, and the monstrous blunder frowns in all its hideousness. Let the sentences which I have above quoted from Dr. Caird and Sir Walter Scott be *implemented* (as our law jargon words it), and the blunder glares out upon us. Let us write as follows:—

“Believing in that love stronger than death which for me, and such as *me* [am], drained the cup of untold sorrows”—‘*Religion of Common Life*’, p. 66.

“ Yet oft in Holy Writ we see

“ Even such weak minister as *me* [am]

“ May the oppressor bruise”.

‘*Marmion*, canto v, xxxi.

* “This shrinking from the use of the personal pronoun, this autophobia, as it may be called, is not indeed a proof of the modesty it is designed to indicate; any more than the hydrophobia is a proof that there is no thirst in the constitution. *On the contrary it rather betrays a morbidly sensitive self-consciousness.*”

“ So far indeed is the anxiety to suppress the personal pronoun from being a sure criterion of humility, that there is frequently a ludicrous contrast between the conventional generality of our language and the egotism of the sentiments expressed in it.”

“ Modesty must dwell within, in the heart; and a brief *I* is the modestest, most natural, simplest word I can use.” ‘*Guesses at Truth*’, pp. 142, 148, 150.

But it is not in grammar only that the Gre-
cian Dean endeavours to mislead us Scotchmen.
He tries his hand also at pronunciation. He
writes as follows:

“We still sometimes, even in good society, hear
ospital, *erb*, and *umble*—all of them very offensive, but
the last of them by far the worst”.

Will it be believed that the dictionaries are
against Dean Alford (all except two) in the pro-
nunciation of the above words? It surely re-
quires a man to be possessed of not a little
meism before he presumes to write as he has
done respecting the foregoing words. The fol-
lowing dictionaries are in his favour (they are
but *two*)—namely Webster and Jameson; while,
on the contrary, Walker, Sheridan, Perry,
Knowles, Smart, Wright, Craig, and Surenne
are, all of them, against the Dean; and
Worcester countenances both ways.

The fact is, that this word is simply the
French one—*humble*—and was pronounced by
our Norman ancestors as the above eight dic-
tionaries continue to pronounce it: two only
being against them, and one of these an
American.

The Dean says, “The English Prayer-Book
“has at once settled the pronunciation of this
“word [*humble*] for us, by causing us to give
“God our ‘*humble and hearty thanks*’ in the
“General Thanksgiving. *Umble and hearty*”,
says the Dean, “no man can pronounce without
“a pain in his throat”.

Did ever such drivelling proceed from a very Reverend Dean of Canterbury? But this is not all; for, giving the vulgar mode of uttering the entire sentence, the *critic* is so utterly given over to special pleading that he writes as follows:—

“*Umble* and *hearty* no man can pronounce without a pain in his throat; and ‘*umblanarty*’ he certainly never was meant to say”.

If this very Reverend Dean decides the pronunciation of the Greek language on such frivolous data as he does this word *humble*, I must hold him to be of but little worth as a philologist; and I advise my compatriots to let most votes carry the day. With our eight dictionaries (all of them of much higher standing than the two opponents) let us decide that the word “*humble*” shall not be aspirated.

The very Reverend Dean appears to me to be out of his element when treating of a matter of *taste*. He writes as follows:—

“*Humble* and *Hearty* is the only pronunciation which will suit the alliterative style of the prayer, which has in it not only with our *lips* but in our *lives*”

There is coarseness and the absence of poetic tact in this observation. *Humble*, in order to sympathise with the sentiment which is expressed in the word, ought to be *umble*. *H* is a hearty letter: *U* is despondent. *Alliteration*, if it teaches *anything* in such a matter, teaches

the very reverse of this unsympathetic and unpoetic work-day Dean's whimsies upon the subject. The word *humble* ought, in the prayer, to be enunciated with a pause—it ought to be uttered with *feeling*, which requires a pause—it ought *not* to be followed rapidly by the words "*and hearty*" which ought to express a different kind of feeling—a warmth, a cordiality, a vigour. Let the Dean appeal to anything but some humdrum in *holy orders*, and it will be given against him, or I am in the last degree mistaken.

The Dean is pleased also to be facetious upon "penny-a-liners". We, Scotchmen, have no especial complaint to make against him on *this* score; but this we *may* say, he may just as well, attempt "to stem the Thames with a pitchfork" as to stereotype the "Queen's English" as he calls it. Benjamin Franklin could bring down the electric fluid from the clouds—an invention which has carried language with the speed of lightning, but he could not control human language, and yet his *I*-ism was *me*-ism when compared with the efforts of the Dean upon this particular. In a letter to Noah Webster, dated Dec. 26, 1789, Franklin writes as follows:—

"I find that several new words have been introduced into our parliamentary language. For example, I find a verb formed from the substantive *notice*. I should not have *noticed* this were it not. Also another verb from the substantive *advocate*. The gentleman who *advocates* or has *advocated* that motion. Another from the substantive *progress*. The committee having *progressed*. The word *opposed* (though not a new word) I find used in

a new manner, as, The gentlemen who are *opposed* to this new measure. If you happen to be of my opinion (continues Franklin) with respect to these innovations, you will use your authority in reprobating them”.

No doubt Dean Alford would have lent a helping hand here; but with what success? The progress of language is a thing far mightier than the breath of Deans!

I take exception to the Dean’s treatment of the word *press*, which has not *yet* ceased to be a collective noun. *He* has no right (on *his* principles) to write as follows:—

“ *Allude to* is used in a new sense by the “press, and not only by *them*, but”. The Dean ought here to have written “*it*” instead of “*them*;” and yet we find this teacher playing himself with the inaccuracy (so he calls it) of saying “*twice one are two*”, and “*three times three are nine*”. In order to prove the grammatical incorrectness of these two assertions, the clever Dean alters the form of the expression, and, “*presto*”! the juggle is concluded. “What we “want (says the Dean, being simply this, that “three taken three times makes up, *is* equal to “nine”. Now, admitting this to be correct, Mr. Dean—admitting *three* not to be *plural* any more than *one* (which is just what *you* should prove, but also just what *you* do not *attempt* to prove) nevertheless, admitting your *improved* premises; yet, when we say what *you* “*want*” to say in another mode, if that other mode have a plural nominative, the verb must also be

plural ; and we say “*three times*” must be plural, and so must even *three*.

I might for example, say of a man and his wife—“*they twain are* one flesh ”; but you, Mr. Dean, might reply to me (as you are now doing), “ What we want to say is simply this—this man “*is*, and that woman *is*, one flesh—makes up, *is* “equal to one flesh.” All very good ! But so long as we speak of them as *twain*, we must (in order to be grammatical) employ the word *are* respecting them.

It appears to me, Pernickity Pawkie, that this Southron and Prelatic Dean has mystified and bewildered his reasoning powers respecting the grammar of the multiplication table by a highly-wrought abstraction upon the Athanasian Creed respecting the triune and official subsistencies of the Godhead—“ *Three* in one sense, and *one* “in another”—may, by some misconception of the fact, have deranged the ideas of numerical relation in the Dean’s mind, and it will account for his hallucination in reference to the mode of stating the multiplication table. It is this Dean’s idiosyncracy to refine.—*The Christian News*, May 2, 1863.

THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH.

A CRITICISM FROM ROUTLEDGE'S MAGAZINE,
Oct., 1864.

THE study of language is one of the most instructive and, at the same time, one of the

most interesting occupations with which we can employ ourselves ; and, in the present age of advanced education, it is absolutely necessary for everybody to obtain a knowledge of his own language, and to read, speak, and write it in accordance with the known rules on the subject. However well taught a man may be in other branches of study, he will never make his way in the world unless he can speak correctly, since correct speaking is, as it were, the outward attribute of the gentleman, and the one by which his other qualifications are judged.

The Dean is evidently not a graceful writer of English, as he is sure to have put forth all his strength in the composition of a book on language. This strength, however, seems to consist in devising the most unnatural manner of writing good English, and in violating some of Lord Kames's most important rules with regard to words expressing things connected in thought being placed as near together as possible.

‘*The Queen's English*,’ we must state, professes to be a reprint from a widely circulated periodical entitled ‘*Good Words*,’ and the subject is said to be ‘presented to the public ‘in a considerably altered form.’

This is strictly true, for, having compared the reprint with the original articles, we are able to compliment the Dean on the many judicious alterations he has made ; thanks, perhaps, to the suggestions given by a gentleman styled, in

a country paper, "a knight, bearing on his "shield the emblem of the lunar orb", and other lovers of pure English who have considered that the reverend grammarian has in some way defiled the pure well of English.

Sitting down with the book,* and the volume of '*Good Words*' for 1863 before us, we note no great difference until we come to the following expression: "The Queen "is of course no more the proprietor of the "English language *than you or I*"—(see '*Good Words*'), but in the volume we have "*than any of us*." Why this change? On page 152 of the book we read: "What are we to think of "the question, whether 'than' does or does not "govern an accusative case? 'than I': 'than "me': which is right? My readers will probably "answer without hesitation, the former. But "is the latter so certainly wrong? *We are* "accustomed to hear it stigmatized as being so; "but, *I think, erroneously*. Milton writes, "*'Paradise Lost*,' ii, 299,—

"Which when Beelzebub perceived, *than whom, Satan except*, none higher sat."

"And thus every one of us would speak: 'than "who', would be intolerable. *And this seems to settle the question.*"

So the Dean thinks. We, however, do not. Poetry is not often considered a high authority on matters of grammatical construction, although the Dean seems to think it should

* Second Edition.

be, since this is the only instance of "than" governing the accusative that he deigns to cite: besides, it is evident that in many cases, the employment of the accusative instead of the nominative, gives to the sentence another meaning, thus:

- 1 He likes you better than me.
- 2 He likes you better than I.

Surely it is manifest to everybody that the first form means that he likes you better than (he likes) me, and that the latter means, he likes you better than I (like you); and yet our Dean in an authoritative manner says, that you may say either "*than I*", or "*than me*", but that the former should be used only when solemnity is required, as "*My Father is greater than I.*"

Is solemnity required when mention is made of the Queen in regard to her proprietorship of the English language? We trow not. Why, then, does our Dean lay down a rule, and break it on the first page of his Essays? This reflection seems to have occurred to the mind of the author, who probably in his reprint weighed with care every expression he made use of. This at any rate seems the only reason why he should alter "*than I*" to "*any one of us*," and thus screen himself under an expression which fits either rule.

Let us pause for a short time and note what some authorities write about this conjunction. Lowth is of opinion that such forms as "thou "art wiser than me" are bad grammar. Mr. E. F. Graham, in his excellent book on English

Style, quotes the objective case after "than" as a downright grammatical error, whilst our old friend Lindley Murray devotes a page and a half to the discussion of this question, and, after citing the lines of Milton just quoted, concludes his notice by saying, "The phrase *than whom*, "is, however, avoided by the best modern "writers". The crowning point of all, however, is that the very author whom Dean Alford quotes in support of his theory, says in the first book of '*Paradise Lost*' :—

"What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less *than he?*"

Near the end of a paragraph in the first Essay occurs the following sentence, which is omitted in the book :—"And I really don't wish "to be dull; so please, dear reader, to try *and* "not think me so."

It was wise, indeed, on the Dean's part, to omit this sentence in his book, for probably it contains the worst mistake he has made. Try *and* think, indeed! Try *to* think, we can understand. Fancy saying "the dear reader "*tries and thinks* me so"; for, mind, a conjunction is used only to connect words, and can govern no case at all. However, as the Dean has not allowed this to appear in his book, we refrain from alluding further to it.

As the Dean admits that his notes are for the most part insulated and unconnected, we presume that we need make no apology if our critical remarks happen to partake of the same

character; for, the reader will easily understand that criticism on unconnected topics must itself also be unconnected.

Who does not recollect with pleasure those dear old ladies, Sairah Gamp and Betsey Prig? " *Which*, altering the name to Sairah Gamp, I "drink," said Mrs. Prig.

"As I write these lines, *which* I do while "waiting in a refreshment room at Reading "between a Great Western and a South Eastern "train," says the Dean. The time when, and the place where, great men have written their books is always interesting information, and we thank Dean Alford for telling us where he wrote this elegant sentence; but fancy, what a very small refreshment room there must be at Reading, if it stands between two trains. May we venture to suggest that the sentence would have been improved if " *which I do* ", and the words from "between" to "train," had been altogether omitted. " *Which* you are right, my dear," says Mrs. Harris.

On page 67 the Dean comes to that which he says must form *a principal part* of his little work. The principal part means, we believe, more than half of anything, but as in the present work there are evidently two principal parts (at least), it appears that the volume contains more than the two halves. Perhaps the Dean was waiting between two trains in Ireland when he penned this sentence.

With regard to the demonstrative pronouns, " *this* refers to the nearest person or thing, and

"*that* to the most distant," says Murray. This, however, is not Dean Alford's view of the matter.

After mentioning the name Sophœnetus (and no other), he writes, "Every clergyman is, or "ought to be, familiar with his Greek Testament; two minutes reference to *that* will show "him how every one of *these* names ought "to be pronounced."

Who is right here—Lindley Murray or the Dean of Canterbury? Stop! stop! Not so fast. In theory, the Dean agrees with our grammarian; for, eleven pages further on, he says,—"‘*this*’ and ‘*these*’ refer to persons and things “present, or under immediate consideration; “‘*that*’ and ‘*those*’ to persons and things not “present, nor under immediate consideration; “or if either of these, one degree further re-“moved than the others of which are used ‘*this*’ “and ‘*these*’". He then mentions a Scottish friend, who always designates the book which he has in hand as “*that book*.” Surely this Scotchman and the Dean belong to one family.

It is not often in books that we see an author plainly contradict himself within the space of sixteen lines.

On page 183 we read, "I should speak correctly if I said, ‘Dr. Johnson *flew* upon me’: “incorrectly, if I said, ‘he *fell* upon me’."

On the same page we read—

"And as to my correspondent's last dictum, “that ‘he fell upon me’, would be incorrect; let “him look at 1 Kings ii, 25, 34, 46, in which “places it is said of Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei,

"respectively, that Benaiah, the son of Johoiada, "fell upon him that he died."

Now in all these actions we have instances of men falling upon others. How happens it that what is right in one case is wrong in the other?

We now come with much pleasure to the last fault which we have to find with Dr. Alford's book. We have purposely deferred any mention of this particular subject until now, on the same principle as that which actuated the schoolboy who always kept the best till the last.

On page 280 we read the following excellent remarks:—

"Avoid, likewise, all *slang* words. There is "no greater nuisance in society than a talker of "slang. It is only fit (when innocent, which it "seldom is) for raw schoolboys and one-term "freshmen, to astonish their sisters with."

Of course after expressing himself so strongly on this point, it is not to be expected that, in a work on the *Queen's English*, Dean Alford will make use of slang terms. Let us see.

On page 2, he tells us, "He bowls along it with "ease in a vehicle, which a few centuries ago "would have been broken to pieces in a deep rut, "or (would have) *come to grief* in a bottomless "swamp."

In the original notes the words *would have* were omitted. One of his censors then suggested that the sentence was "or *would have* "*been come to grief*". On page 132 of his book, the Dean defends his elliptical mode of spelling: but, on page 2, by altering it, he tacitly admits that he is wrong.

On page 41 he tells us about some people who had been detained by a *tipple*.

On page 178 we are told that the Dean and his family took a *trap* from the inn.

And, on page 154, he writes to Mr. Moon, "If "you see an old *party* in a shovel, that will be "me". Whereas, on page 245, in sneering at our journals he says, a man in them is a *party*. Now we are persuaded that no newspaper writes of a man in such vulgar language. This style seems to have been left to a Dean when writing on controversial subjects.

THE DEAN'S ENGLISH *v.* THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH.

A CRITICISM FROM THE LONDON REVIEW,

July 30, 1864.

A WRITER in the current number of '*The Edinburgh Review*' censures Mr. Moon for hyper-critically objecting to sentences the meaning of which is perfectly clear, though it is possible, having regard to the mere construction, to interpret them in a sense ludicrously false. We think that Mr. Moon does occasionally exhibit an excessive particularity; but many of his criticisms on Dr. Alford are, as the reviewer himself admits, thoroughly deserved. Because

certain ambiguities have become recognised forms of speech, and are universally understood in the correct sense, a writer is not entitled to indulge in a lax mode of expression, which a little trouble would have rendered unimpeachable without any sacrifice of ease, grace, or naturalness. The reviewer quotes or imagines two sentences to which no reasonable objection could be made, though the construction is assuredly not free from ambiguity:—"Jack "was very respectful to Tom, and always took "off his hat when he met him." "Jack was very "rude to Tom, and always knocked off his hat "when he met him." Now, as a mere matter of syntax, it might be doubtful whether Jack did not show his respect to Tom by taking off Tom's hat, and his rudeness by knocking off his own; but the fault is hardly a fault of construction—it is a fault inherent in the language itself, which has not provided for a distinction of personal pronouns. The sentences in question are clearly defective; but they could be amended only by an excessive verbosity and tautology, which would be much more objectionable; and, at any rate, *they are no justification of those errors of composition which might easily be amended, and which spring from the writer's own indolence or carelessness.* The confusion of personal pronouns, however, is a subject worthy of comment. It is incidentally alluded to by a writer in the last number of '*The Quarterly Review*', in an article on the report of the Public School Commission-

ers ; and a ludicrous example is given, from the evidence of a Somersetshire witness in a case of manslaughter, though, notwithstanding the jumble, the sense is clear enough. The fatal affray was thus described by the peasant :— “ He’d a stick, and he’d a stick, and he licked “ he, and he licked he ; and if he’d a licked he “ as hard as he licked he, he’d a killed he, and “ not he he.” Now, supposing the witness not to know either combatant, one does not see how he could have expressed himself more clearly, and he would have a right to charge the defect on the language. Like everything else in the world, human speech is very imperfect, and we must sometimes take it with all its blemishes, because we can do no better. For instance, there is a certain form of expression which involves a downright impossibility, but which nevertheless is universally accepted. We cannot explain what we mean more pertinently than by referring to the phrase commonly seen painted on dead walls and palings :—“ Stick no “ bills.” Here what is intended is a prohibition ; but it really takes the form of an injunction, and of an injunction to do an impossibility. We are not told to *refrain* from sticking something, or anything—we are *commanded* to stick something, and the something we are to stick is “ no bills ” ! We are to stick on the wall or paling something which has no existence. Let us try to imagine the process. We must first take up the nonentity in one hand, and with the other apply paste to

its non-existent back; we are then to hoist it on a pole, and flatten it against a wall. Of course, the only correct expression would be, "Do not stick bills"; yet no one would seriously recommend the change. (The reader will observe that we have here unconsciously fallen into the same mode of speech. "*No one* "would recommend" !) The received expression is more succinct, and it has now the sanction of time. In like manner we say, "He "was so vexed that he ate *no* dinner", and a hundred other phrases of the same character. But they are radically bad, and go far to excuse the uneducated for so frequently using the double negative. The unlettered man knows that he wants to state the negation of something, and not the affirmation, and he obscurely perceives that a species of affirmation of the very thing he wants to deny is put into his mouth by such a sentence as, "He *ate* *no* "dinner"; so he whips in another negative, and really makes the phrase more intelligible to himself, and to those of his own class who hear him.

Some comparatively modern modes of expression, though not capable of defence, have already struck their roots so far that it is almost impossible to drag them up. The writer in '*The Edinburgh Review*,' when condemning the recent use of the word "supplement" as a verb, says:—"So infectious has it become that "it has, once or twice, crept, notwithstanding "our utmost vigilance, into these pages."

Ludicrously enough, one of the faults pointed out in this article is committed in another article in the very same number. The reviewer of Dr. Alford objects (and we think very justly objects) to such French-English as—"Born in "1825, our hero went to Eton in 1837." But in the article on Edward Livingston we read—"Born on the 26th of May, 1764, he was in his "thirteenth year on the day of the Declaration "of Independence."

Let us conclude with a hope that Dean Alford and Mr. Moon have by this time made up their quarrel, and that henceforth they will unite their forces for the defence of '*The Queen's English*'.

CRITICISM.

AN EXTRACT FROM THE SATURDAY REVIEW.

JUST two hundred years ago, according to Mr. Hallam, appeared the first number of the first review ever published. Monday, the 5th of January, 1665, was the birthday of the '*Journal des Scavans* ;' and the enormous development which the system of reviewing has received since then, is sufficient proof of its utility. Reviewers were at first simply reporters ; from being reporters they soon grew by a natural process into judges, and from judges they became legislators. They succeeded in laying

down canons of criticism which affected the development of the public taste; and it is in this capacity that they have been accused, by the sentimental school, of every variety of harshness and meanness. The existence of a vigorous periodical criticism is as necessary a sanitary condition of modern literature as the existence of good ventilation is of a house. The incidental inconveniences that result may be compared to the draughts which sometimes kill off invalids in over-ventilated houses. But in literature invalids ought to be killed off. They are, indeed, in the habit of complaining during the process, and weak-minded persons sometimes take up their complaints, and rail somewhat vaguely against the evil spirit of periodical criticism generally. The ignorance of the *Edinburgh* reviewers who said that Wordsworth was dull and childish, and the brutality of the assault upon Keats in the *Quarterly*, are the staple examples of late years. They are neither of them good for much. Keats was not really "snuffed out by an article": and Wordsworth would have been none the worse for attending to some of Jeffrey's criticism. If he had known how to take advice, he would not have mixed with some noble poetry so much that no human being ever reads except from a sense of duty. In fact, Wordsworth, whilst hidden in a region sheltered from critics, produced stuff which, as coming from a true poet, is the best proof of the necessity of the critical spur to keep poets up to the mark. If he had lived in London instead

of on the shores of Rydal, the "*Solitary*" and the "*Wanderer*" could never have been so pitilessly prosy. But, without examining particular cases, the general accusation seems to us to be childish. Few people, however, will contend that the exposure of bad taste and writing is too severe habitually. So long as there is an unfailing supply of absurdity, its existence seems a tolerable proof that it has not been laughed at sufficiently. Though you bray a fool in a mortar, we are told, yet will not his folly depart from him; and we may add, what is still more annoying, the braying will not seem to hurt him. He will be just as happy after the operation as he was before. The person against whom the attack is directed is therefore the last to be pitied. The present system of criticism produces merely a systematic expression of the average opinion of the more highly educated classes. It is the embodiment, in a fixed form, of the floating criticism that must always permeate society. If a man is ever to publish anything beyond his own narrow circle, it is a great blessing to him to have a court ready to express the common judgment promptly and frankly. A man may occasionally exist of such delicate constitution that he cannot bear to hear what every one thinks of him—that he requires to be sheltered from every rude blast, and reared carefully like a plant in a hothouse. The real difference which the present plan produces is, that he gets decisively in one dose the opinions which would otherwise come strained

and filtered to him through a number of different channels. He has to take his cold bath at once, like a man, instead of sneaking into it by degrees. There can be no doubt that the effect of the shock is generally healthy. If Keats had really been slain by an article, it would perhaps have been as well that he should take his poison in one dose, instead of collecting it drop by drop. A series of snubs from kind friends would be even more depressing to most men than one public slap in the face. In fact, we doubt whether any one example can be given in which public criticism can really be shown to have produced evils that would not have arisen equally when each man was his own critic.

It may be contended that criticism establishes a standard of taste which improves the inferior intellects, but is a check to the most energetic. Reviewing is thus considered, not as producing individual hardships, but as a visible and outward manifestation of a force which imperceptibly tends to level society at large. To consider this question would involve a consideration of the merits and weaknesses of our civilization—a subject of some extent. We can only state our impression that an examination of this particular case would go to prove that this general complaint is capable of an answer. We should find that the establishment of an empire of public opinion is, in some aspects, even favourable to vigour and originality. However that may be, we should have established sufficiently the claims of reviewers to the

gratitude of the greater part of mankind in identifying their influence with what are called, rightly or wrongly, the most progressive tendencies of the age. An historical review of their achievements in past times would finally confirm their rank as benefactors of mankind. A list of the follies destroyed, of the prejudices overcome, and of the original power brought out in different journals, from the days of the *Journal des Scavans* to those of the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* or the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, would be a record of all the great improvements of two centuries.

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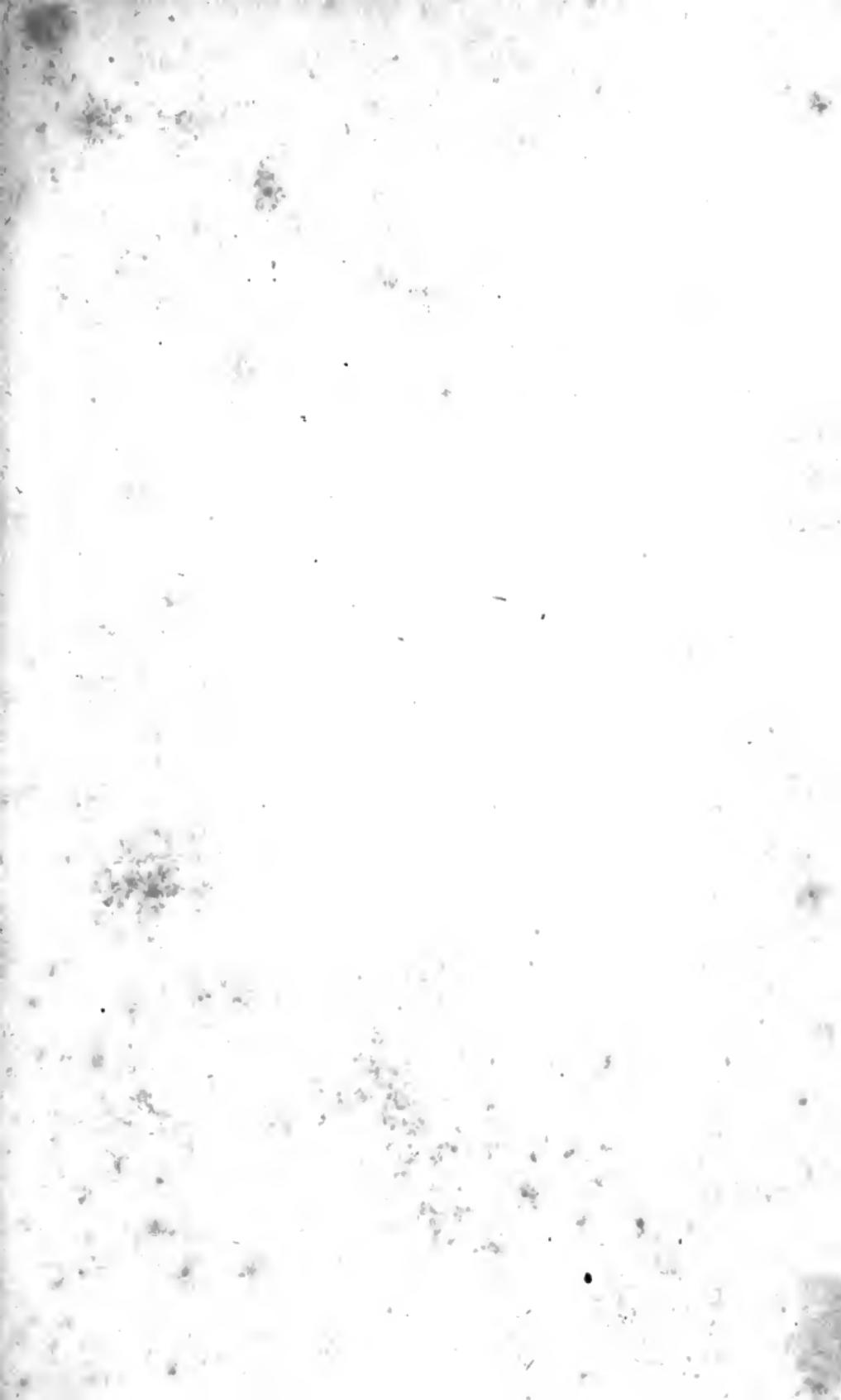
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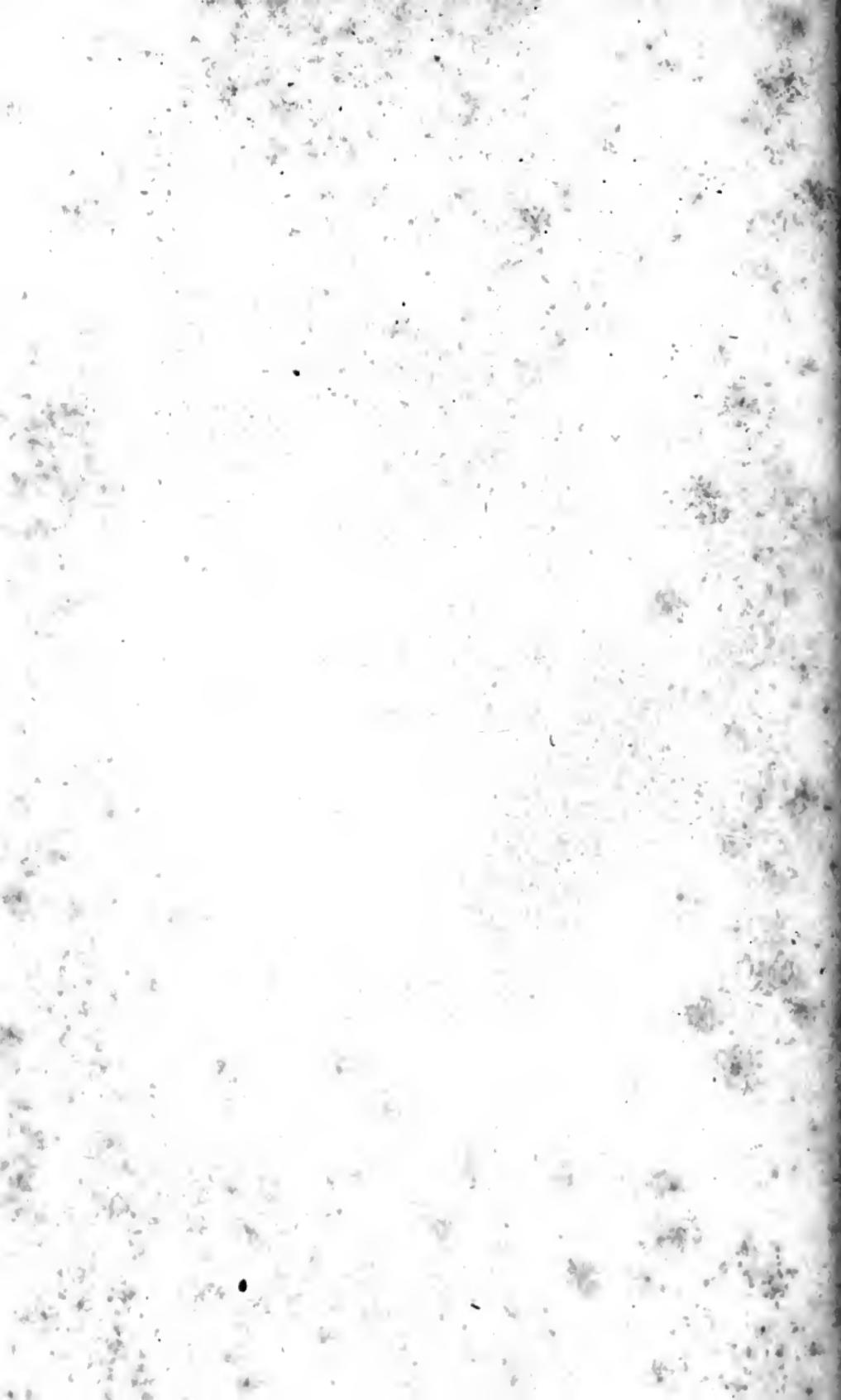
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